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Wishart

The fact of prayer

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The Fact of Prayer

ITS PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES

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INTRODUCTION

SOME people need no introduction; they seem to lift the latch even without knocking, and walk directly into our lives like old friends. Some books, also, present themselves as such congenial, companionable spirits that they need no introduction. We say of them, as we sometimes flatter ourselves by saying of a great and good sermon, "That is just what I think."

This book by Dr. Wishart on the philosophy of prayer is just such a book. To the absolute geniality of the thought is added a literary charm that is most rare in works on philosophy. The author not only makes "philosophy speak English," but makes the poets speak philosophy and philosophy become truly devotional.

In this note of introduction it is needless to keep the reader back a moment from the pleasure that awaits him in the book, by attempting to outline the course of thought presented—and thus essaying the futile task of trying to say in a page or two what the author has written a book to say.

Dr. Wishart was for many years a professor in

Xenia Theological Seminary, and now (since 1923) holds a professorship in San Francisco Seminary. Of course, he is a conservative thinker, as his book shows; his is not the lure of the new, but the charm of the true. One does not need to agree with his every line and every thought; when did ever one philosopher wholly agree with another? But moral beings cannot exist without some philosophy of this world and of the next. Dr. Wishart does not make us know everything about prayer and God's attitude toward it, but he does enable us to catch some glimpses of His glory.

MELVIN GROVE KYLE.

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PREFACE

BOOKS on the subject of prayer are innumerable, and not a few of them are of such excellence that they have become classics. The theme, however, is very vital, and there is still room for discussion of it. Some justification for the appearance of a new volume on the old topic may perhaps be found in the fact that its point of approach is not the usual one. Though this is not primarily a devotional work, one hopes that this element will not be found altogether wanting. If the aim is lower it is still a worthy aim. The book assumes that prayer is a fundamental fact of our natures. On this basis there is an attempt to show:—

First, the certainty of the great truths of the spiritual realm which it presupposes—in a word, the fact that on the side of religion, as well as through our senses, we come in contact with reality.

Second, that the instinctive needs of our souls, as these are expressed in genuine worship, form a criterion of truth in the religious sphere, and that, tried by this standard, Christianity built upon the

person and work of the divine Christ, is vindicated as the sufficient, universal, and final religion.

Third, that supplication to the Father, on the basis of this great redemptive plan, is the secret of victory over evil within us and without, and over all the sorrows and changes of time. These are fundamental affirmations, although they are not formally treated in this order. I should be happy to think that this discussion had impressed the same convictions upon some others, had steadied some who were troubled with doubts, and had induced some to begin what Brother Lawrence called "The Practice of the Presence of God."

The book is based in part upon a few lectures given at different times and places, although these have been revised and expanded until little of the original material remains. A considerable portion of the fourteenth chapter was taken from an article published in *The Bibliotheca Sacra.*

J. E. W.

San Anselmo, Cal.

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PART I

THE REALITY OF PRAYER

I

PRAYER AS A FACT

"Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it find rest in Thee."—AUGUSTINE.

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

—TENNYSON.

THE honest investigator who would make a "correct draft of human nature" must take into account this notable phenomenon, that men pray. It is a practice which is virtually universal. There are apparent exceptions to the rule, but, however striking they may in some cases be, they are, at best, exceptions. It is to be conceded too that this expression of the religious nature has often taken forms which are faulty, selfish, superstitious and degrading.

To tie petitions on a wheel and whirl them in the air, to tell the beads of a rosary, is doubtless to make use of a method which is unintelligent and mechanical; and indeed to repeat familiar words by rote, when the thoughts are far away, is to do the same.

Furthermore, supplication may be offered for things which are not good, even for things which are posi-

tively evil—for the blood of enemies, for rapine and plunder, for gratification of ambition at the expense of the suffering of others; but even such travesties of true prayer testify, however maladroitly, that there is a side of our natures which must go out toward God.

Certainly, if we have in mind only outward acts of devotion, such as the expressing of our needs in words, the placing of the body in a reverent attitude, or the keeping sacred of set times, we can make no sweeping assertions about the universality of these approaches to deity. But there are probably few who would defend so narrow a definition of this great spiritual phenomenon. Man is "incurably religious," and prayer is the natural and inevitable expression of his religious nature, and is not the exclusive possession of any of the great historic religions.

It does not depend upon the creed, though it may be marred by ignorance or error. It is at bottom seeking after God and communion with God. It may be put into words or be only a wistful thought, a breathing of desire. It may be an act of worship, but in some great souls it has seemed to be the habitual state of mind. It tends to grow weak unless it is given utterance at stated seasons, and yet there is truth in the saying of the old monks, *Laborare est orare,* and the saintly Brother Lawrence, who was a cook in a monastery, said that he observed the hours as ordered by his superiors, but that he had as full a sense of the presence of God when at work in the kitchen as when on his knees before the holy sacrament. Thus there are innumerable ways and myriads of circumstances in which prayer goes up from needy hearts to the Father in heaven.

This experience in which the finite comes into con-

tact with the infinite may have different phases. The loftiest souls at their greatest moments have not infrequently been thrilled with the sense of the presence of God, an enjoyment of fellowship in which nothing was asked and nothing was needed, and the human response to the divine manifestation was deep adoration. But such visits to the King's country always produce in a sensitive conscience a feeling of unworthiness like that which led Isaiah to exclaim, "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;" and so true supplications must not lack the element of confession.

Moreover, prayer is more than contemplation and communion. That common view is not at fault which speaks of a throne of grace, of One who is ready to help in time of need, and which therefore thinks of this spiritual exercise mainly in the aspect of petition. There is but one fitting frame of mind when blessings have been received, and that is thanksgiving. Nor must we in our requests forget others. This act of worship grows in power when two or three are met together, and even in the closet when the doors are shut it ought again and again to take the form of intercession. There may be true prayer, however, with some or all of these characteristics, among those who are quite unconscious of such distinctions and have never in any way attempted to analyse their almost instinctive appeals to the God, or gods, whom they acknowledge.

If we are here dealing with an essential human trait which is virtually universal, it is a fact which is of immeasurable importance. It is true indeed that now and again some traveller will report that he has found a tribe with no idea of God and with no aspirations or

practices which even remotely resemble supplication to Him. So often has further and deeper investigation demonstrated the falsity of such first impressions that one may with a good deal of confidence affirm that some primitive impulses thus to worship are the inheritance of the race. But this is not the whole story. There are tendencies of precisely the opposite kind.

Cases are cited of men who seem to have been converted from faith in God to a life of defiant unbelief. In many of these instances the revolt from the usual practice is not as violent as it seems. Times of special need come, and then, even after years of neglect, help from above is sought once more. Thomas Carlyle, in a famous letter, tells how, though he had long abandoned the devotional habits in which he was brought up, he was once more indulging in something like petitions to God. He was essentially a man of prayer. Abraham Lincoln was at one time a doubter, though not for long. The anguish and stress of war drove him to his knees and his life took on a most Christian attitude. And the obscure men and women who in the same manner have fallen only to rise cannot be numbered for multitude.

It must, however, be confessed that after full allowance is made for exceptions that can be thus explained there is still a remainder. There is no reason to doubt that there are barren hearts with no springs from which flow the waters of praise and petition; some perhaps have never learned to pray, others spurn the impulse to do so until it seems to die of starvation. What shall we say of these things?

This first, that when we deal with religion we have entered the field of values, we are interested in those

supreme things, beauty, truth, and goodness, especially the last. (It is not meant that religion can be analysed into ethics or esthetics or any combinations of them. Cf. Otto, *Das Heilige*.) Of course, these abstract conceptions can never alone be the objects of worship. One cannot enter into fellowship with them. One cannot call upon them for help in time of need. Nothing can satisfy our deepest cravings except a God in whom these transcendant values have their home and of whom they are the manifestations. Him we can adore and to Him we can present our pleas for assistance. To Him we can say, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us," "Guide me in thy truth and teach me," "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory!"

Now, the fitting response to these highest values is something more than mere intellectual apprehension, they demand appreciation, and appreciation is impossible unless there be power to appreciate, unless there be faculty and insight and vision. This native gift may be small or large, but in any case it is at first only a latent capacity which must be awakened and developed. For example, there is a world of beauty in that melody and harmony of sounds that we call music, and it is probable that this beauty makes at least some slight appeal to every sane mind. But a great difference between different individuals in this respect shows itself in early childhood. The gifted Mozart begins the study of the art to which his nature was attuned at the age of three. Of the great pianist Paderewski it is said that he never forgets an air. But there are those like General Grant who cannot tell one tune from another. And the strains that will thrill a Mozart or a Paderewski may mean

nothing to the man who has no such endowments as theirs.

Moreover, natures of the finest quality in this respect often lie comparatively dormant because of untoward circumstances and lack of training, or their development is thwarted like that of the gnarled and twisted tree which has been given the wrong direction. The beautiful folk songs of many nations give evidence that many a " mute inglorious " Bach or Beethoven is buried unknown to fame in some country churchyard. Genius itself may be smothered by the commonplace, baffled by the contradictions of outrageous fortune, or led astray until it is befouled by mire and filth.

The real musician must first of all have some true faculty, and it must be called out and matured by study and practice. He must have a growing familiarity with the best things in the art to which he is devoted. He must give time to his chosen pursuit and often neglect other interests which are good in themselves for the sake of the higher value. In a sense the musician, like the poet, is born, not made. In another sense he is the product of discipline and environment.

The same principles hold good in the field of moral and religious values. Some great souls were born with a singularly rich religious endowment. We cannot but believe that such men as St. Paul and St. Augustine, St. Francis and St. Bernard, Luther and Savonarola, Newman and Spurgeon, had by nature a spark of divine fire, a gift of spiritual sensitiveness that may be called genius. But persons of the very opposite type are often met, perhaps most admirable persons in many ways, but marvellously unresponsive to the appeals of the unseen and eternal.

Such statements might be made—indeed, have been made—about one of our greatest historians, Lord Macaulay. He was a man of brilliant powers and of most attractive personality, manly and yet tender, loyal to his friends, most devoted to those bound to him by ties of blood, irreproachable in public and private conduct, leaving behind him, as his nephew and biographer said, the record of a life every act of which was as clear as one of his own sentences; but what was his inner life? He himself scarcely gave an indication that he had an inner life. In all his voluminous writings, in his masterly history, in his splendid essays, in his charming letters, though he discussed ecclesiastical affairs and pictured religious life with extraordinary eloquence, it would be hard to find a hint that he for a moment pondered what his contemporary, Daniel Webster, called the greatest thought that ever entered his own mind, the thought of his responsibility to almighty God. Perhaps the church circles which he encountered at some period awakened invincible prejudices in his keen intellect. But the probability rather is that, lavish as nature had been in her gifts to him, there was one which she had bestowed only in the most stinted measure, the gift of spiritual insight and appreciation.

It cannot be conceded, however, that any normal human is absolutely devoid of religious capacity. This may in some cases be very slight, just as artistic and musical ability is often hardly discernible, but the mind that had no least trace of these powers would not be whole and sound. It is surely not too great boldness to believe that no one of our race is born without some faint outlines of the image of God. But the nature may be like a field which lies fallow from

neglect. It may produce harvests of weeds and briars. It may be trodden down and hardened by the cares of the world and the lust of other things. The devout life is not the result of accident or necessity. It comes of deep plowing, of constant cultivation, of openness to the sun of righteousness and the showers of His blessings. The spiritual faculty, even when given in good measure, may be atrophied, and the life will become cold and barren.

Such neglect of some of the finer capacities seems by his own confession to have occurred in the development of a very great man, Charles Darwin. He had at one time enjoyed poetry and kindred arts, been devoted to the beautiful rather than what is commonly called the useful. He came to be almost incapable of appreciating them. His mind, he felt, had turned into a kind of machine for collecting facts and drawing inferences from them. Making full allowance for self-depreciation and for the exaggeration which is often to be found in confessions, it is sufficient to pronounce that this great thinker had allowed some of his noblest powers, spiritual insight apparently being among them, to wither and almost die of neglect. His devotion to one value, truth, in some of its aspects, had blinded him to certain higher values, even including truth in other phases. In the same way does the practice of the presence of God well nigh cease in many souls. It is a high art which demands devotion and practice. Yet for all that it is strange how the sense of things divine, even dulled by long disuse, or worse yet, seared by the fires of transgression, will awaken, and perhaps the stings of remorse will prove that it still lives.

There is another, a more fundamental reason, for

the apparent exceptions to the universality of prayer. The present condition of our race can be explained only on the assumption that there has been a moral and spiritual tragedy in its past history by which the image of God has been, not effaced, but defaced, by which the thirst for God has been perverted into a restless discontent, hewing out cisterns, broken and empty cisterns that can hold no water, by which the vision of God has been so clouded that men think of Him as altogether such an one as themselves and change His incorruptible glory into images made by the hand or the imagination, by which desire has been estranged from God in whose will is our peace, and fear and hate have taken the place of love and trust. Our nature is a magnificent palace, but the palace is in ruins.

This is not, as some would have us think, merely the teaching of Christianity which inherited, as they allege, harsh Jewish prejudices and ascetic notions, hostile to the healthy freedom of nature. It may rather be asserted that all the great world religions assume and assert with greater or less clearness that there is something wrong with the children of earth, and that their hope must be in the mercy of God. One sect of Buddhists in Japan have built their teachings substantially upon this foundation so directly that a Jesuit missionary described their doctrine as a sort of Buddhist Lutheranism (Moore, *History of Religions,* Vol. I, p. 132 ff.).

This sense of human failure and guilt gives an undertone of sadness to the profoundest poetry of the ages. It can be heard in the great dramas of the Greeks, as well as in the Book of Job, the Divine Comedy of Dante, and the tragedies of Shakespeare.

Nay, the deepest thinker among modern English masters of song sees a reason for accepting the religion of Christ in the fact that it so emphatically affirms this unpalatable truth.

"The candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith proves false, I find;
For our Essays and Reviews' debate
Begins to tell on the public mind
And Colenso's words have weight.

"I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
See reasons and reasons; this to begin:
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart
At the head of a lie—taught original sin
The corruption of man's heart."

—BROWNING.

The considerations by which some seek to minimize the significance of these facts either give very partial explanations of them or are quite unconvincing. Thus it is alleged that we face here only the inevitable condition of progress, namely, that ideals must outrun attainment; that sin is just this natural sense of the disparity between our dreams and our achievements. This does indeed throw some light on the problem. But it does not account for the feeling of shame and of guilt, the remorse, the self-condemnation that comes from the conviction that the evil need not have been done and that the good might have been chosen. Or some of those who hold that the human race came to its present condition through a long course of evolution—a hypothesis to which religion need not object as long as it does not attempt to shut God out of the process—insist that those bad tendencies which manifest themselves so early in every life and are not wholly overcome even by the most saintly, are sur-

vivals from lower stages in the upward course, remnants of the brute inheritance.

But it must not be forgotten that when the point was reached at which "the ape and tiger died" and the light of reason and conscience dawned even with the faintest beams, the meaning of these baser instincts was entirely changed. The very capacity for God gave them an ethical character. Bloodthirstiness in a wolf or a panther is not sin; it is simply an animal appetite without any moral colour. But in one who is a potential son of God bloodthirstiness is a crime, a defiance of the Father of all, a wrong to society, and an injury to the soul that harbours it, branding that soul with the mark of Cain.

The easiest explanation of the facts of history and of conscience is to say that, though our race has made immense advances in knowledge and culture and civilization, it has suffered a moral and spiritual fall, by refusing the higher call which it dimly heard and yielding to those lower instincts which it was now capable of overcoming, that thus an inclination to evil was fastened upon human nature, and that this miserable inheritance was handed down from generation to generation according to the law of heredity, the scientific term (though broader in its application) for what theologians call original sin.

And so there are two opposite tendencies in us, which are perpetually at war. Our souls are athirst for God and yet we flee from His presence. It is natural to pray, but in our present evil state it is also natural to neglect, or worse still, to hate prayer. Sin, like a foul distemper, has infected all sides of our being and our religious affections themselves have not escaped the disease. Our ideas of God Himself have been

debased, as if he were altogether such an one as ourselves. Worship has often been connected with the lowest vices. Supplications have gone up from lying lips and guilty hearts, for things that are wicked and abominable.

Estrangement from the Father in heaven discovers itself in the very effort to draw near to Him. The ultimate proof of our need of divine assistance, or rather of life from above, is our dull insensibility to that need. For none is the water of life more necessary than for those who are losing their thirst. The curse of our starving condition is that it causes loss of appetite, and loathing for the bread of life, the lack of which is death. Professor William James summed up the results of his investigations of the varieties of religious experience in these two findings, that "there is something wrong about us as we naturally stand," and that "we are saved from the wrongness by making proper connection with the higher powers" (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 508). And the tragedy of this wrongness is that it renders it hard to make that proper connection with the higher powers by which alone it can be righted.

Nevertheless, the capacity for God, the tendency to feel after and find Him, often thwarted by the humdrum round of circumstances and baffled through the opposition within, continually asserts itself, and this is the all-important matter. It is questionable if there are any so lost to good that they never have felt some stirrings of uneasiness over their defiance of heaven, some drawings of the cords of divine love. In spite of its difficulty and their own evil desires, men do pray. "He hath set eternity in their heart" (Ecclesiastes 3:11b). The hunger for God pursues unceasingly

even in the far country and cannot be appeased by the husks of the swine. This is one of the supremely significant facts of life.

"I fled Him down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him down the arches of the years;
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the feet—
'All things betray thee, who betrayest me.'"

—Francis Thompson.

II

THE VALIDITY OF PRAYER

"All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that He heard it once: we shall hear it by and by."
—BROWNING.

"There is as much ground, or as little, for trusting to the report of the moral faculty, as for believing our perceptions, in regard to an external world, or our intellect respecting the relations of number and dimension. Whatever the 'authority' of Reason respecting the true, the same is the 'authority' of Conscience for the right and the good."—MARTINEAU.

THE tendency to pray, that is, to seek after God and to ask His help in any of the various ways in which spirit can speak to spirit, is natural. Is it also justifiable? Can we, in this modern world, with its tremendous growth in knowledge of the universe, with its marvellous success in investigating natural law and explaining by means of it the forces that operate around us, vindicate for this essential feature of the religious life a right to exist?

The very act and attitude of supplication carry certain implications. If it means fellowship, there must be some being with whom that communion is maintained. If it is adoration, there must be an object of reverence. If it is confession, there must be some

one who is wronged, and to whom acknowledgment is made. If it is petition, there must be some one to hear and answer the request. All our spiritual aspirations are meaningless, they are indeed sheer folly, unless there be in the spiritual world something which corresponds to them and can finally satisfy them. As the eye is made for light and demands light, as the ear is made for sound and demands sound, as an intelligent mind is made for an intelligible environment, and demands an intelligible environment, so the prayer instinct is made for God and demands a God in whom the supreme religious values find their home. (I use the word "instinct," of course, in the somewhat loose popular sense, not in the strict scientific application of it. Cf. McDougall, *Social Psychology,* p. 22 ff.)

It may, to be sure, be argued that true worship has great and profound influence for good upon the soul from which it comes, that it inspires courage for life's battle, produces resignation in adversity, awakens hope when all is dark, faith when sight fails, and love the greatest of the graces; that these are an enrichment of the spirit itself; and that they ought to be cultivated and may be won in increasing measure, even if there be no Father in heaven, no spiritual world, and no immortality.

The unanswerable reply to such reasonings must be that prayer has these subjective effects, only because it is believed to have a much higher meaning. Let men once be convinced that it is merely a spiritual gymnastic, that it has no power to cause any changes except in the mind from which it springs, that it is a sort of auto-suggestion and nothing more, then it would soon cease to be even a real spiritual gymnastic. It would die of inanition. If all faith in the unseen

and eternal were dissipated, this practice might for a time survive, from the momentum of ages of belief, from habit, and because the hunger of the heart will often defy the logic of the head, but its life would be gone, its dynamic would be lacking. If our cry to God is nothing but "a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea," let us bravely face the fact, but let us not delude ourselves and stultify our own reason by insisting that we can still retain the values of a religion which we have repudiated. It is fundamental to the idea of prayer that it is a relation between two, the creature and the Creator. If that fundamental idea must be given up, so be it. Assuredly all worship, all supplication must be given up, too.

The central position to be defended in these pages, however, is that, on the religious side of our natures as truly as on the side of our senses—perhaps indeed more truly than in the latter sphere—we touch the world of reality. The values which we must instinctively put highest are the supreme values, and will not disappoint us. We cannot believe that we were created to be deceived and that the constitution of our being is a lie. It may no doubt be necessary to clear away obstructions, to make allowance for perversions and degradations in our spiritual instincts before they can speak in a voice that is clear and authoritative. "What people call *facts* of their inner religious history always involve in some degree a process of interpretation through a system of religious beliefs and ideas" (Galloway, *Philosophy of Religion,* p. 254). The data as given may not be pure data and it may require analysis and criticism to separate the grain from the chaff. This is true even of information which comes to us through the channel of the eye and the ear. But

after all such subtractions are made, there remains a residuum of no small proportions and of unmistakable significance.

Now, the phenomena of prayer are facts of human experience. There have been great souls who felt sure of the presence " unseen but not unknown," of a divine Friend, and who spake with Him face to face. But on the lower plane, those (and there are such) who cannot reach these heights often cherish and strive after certain great religious values, goodness, truth, justice, holiness, unselfishness, love. They place these values on the throne of the heart, they will not allow that any interest is their superior or their equal; and they give them an external reference, they think of them as having their home in the breast of the Eternal.

The thing to be noted, then, is that these are *values,* that they have a worth which we refuse to assess by material measurements, least of all by dollars and cents. The scorn of such low standards by which to put an estimate on that which is beyond price, is felt even by the devotees of the beautiful. Who would have the effrontery to say how much gold and silver should be weighed in the balance against the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven or the Sistine Madonna of Raphael? The wanton destruction of the cathedral of Rheims was an outrage for which there can be no atonement, not merely because of its irreverence, but because thus one more product of genius whose loveliness cannot be recovered, has gone the way of the Parthenon. Robert Burns said of his own songs, " By heaven they shall be invaluable, or of no value at all."

But high as is the place which must be given to expressions of pure beauty, by common consent of those who love both, religious values take precedence

even of these. "There are things," says Principal Shairp, "which are either ends in themselves, or they are nothing; and such, I conceive, religion is. It either is supreme, a good in itself, and for its own sake, or it is not at all. The first and great commandment must either be so set before us, as to be obeyed, entered into, in and for itself, without any ulterior view, or it cannot be obeyed at all" (*Culture and Religion,* p. 89). We reverence these lofty ideals, even when we dwell on a lower plane. Hypocrisy itself does homage to them. Duty, loyalty, devotion, it is these that give worth to life, and we rather despise the man who abandons them to preserve life. For such ideals martyrs have gone to the torture chamber and to the stake, exulting in their victory, and coming generations revere their memories and build monuments to them. Here is a singular fact, that certain values in this world should by common consent be placed so immeasurably high that the world itself should be lightly esteemed in comparison with them, and it is thought praiseworthy to abandon it for their sakes.

It is futile to contrast the laws of nature with ideals of so commanding authority, and to claim for the former greater certainty and a more solid foundation. Man is a part of nature and the values to which his soul clings have their place in nature. They refuse to take any other than the highest place. It does not weaken the significance of this fact to tell how it is supposed that our religious faculties originated and by what process they have reached their present stage. The result that has been achieved is the matter of supreme moment, not the methods employed. It may be that these aptitudes and aspirations have been wrought out through a long course of development, as

the human race acquired new powers and adapted itself to its environment.

If this be so, these capacities do not differ in their history from the lower senses, but even so their growth and persistence show what is the essential nature of that environment in which we live and move and have our being. Or if these are merely tendencies which secured the survival of the individual through the solidarity of the tribe and so waxed stronger and stronger, they have vastly overshot their mark. In a word, unless nature is guilty of a huge blunder of which we are the victims, those values which our profoundest instincts put highest must be highest, and must give us the truest view of fundamental reality.

But as this conclusion is rejected by many thinkers, it merits some further consideration. Thus a modern philosopher of great ability and fairness writes, "As man values himself and his works, he may rightly assign value to the universe which conditions them and permits them to be; nay more, which is made of stuff which had the potential power to raise itself to self-consciousness in him. . . . But the naturalist is sceptical of any other assignment of value to the universe. There is no central, brooding will which has planned it all. The good is not the sun of things from which they get their warmth and inspiration" (Professor Roy Wood Sellars, *Evolutionary Naturalism*, p. 343).

But the question is, why should we reject the testimony of our nature in the sphere of those interests which it ranks highest, when we accept and act upon its witness to material things? Why should we say that it cannot be trusted in what it teaches us concerning goodness and beauty, when we do not think of

doubting the information it brings to us about the world of matter and motion? If the essential constitution of our being has played us false in the greater things with which religion is concerned, what certainty can we have that it is reliable as to what we see and hear and touch and taste? Our sense perceptions deal with objects that seem more immediate and tangible. We depend upon them to meet our bodily wants and maintain physical life. These lower demands are insistent. They must be supplied. And the contacts by which these peremptory needs are met must of necessity appear very close. Indeed nothing could be more sure to our thought than the material world, for on the lower side we are a part of it. I have no inclination to dispute this.

But what right have we to attribute any greater certainty to the data of the senses than to those of religious experience? No justification for this preference can be found in their origin. If the higher powers are merely, as is alleged, the product of a long course of development, so are the lower. If the former are the accumulated tendencies which the organism has acquired in response to its environment, so are the latter. If naturalism objects to the validity of our spiritual intuitions on the ground that, if their history is traced back to the beginning, they will be found rooted in causes that are irrational and of the earth, earthy, our knowledge of facts and forces and all our powers of reason have on this hypothesis precisely the same low pedigree. When we begin to impeach the veracity of our inborn faculties, the past record of one set of witnesses will be found quite as unsavoury as that of the other. The inner certitude which is felt concerning these priceless values for which good men

have been ready to die, is as strong as our assurance of the things that we touch and handle—even stronger, as Lord Tennyson thought in his deeper moments.

> *"Let visions of the night or of the day*
> *Come as they will; and many a time they come,*
> *Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,*
> *This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,*
> *This air that smites his forehead is not air,*
> *But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—*
> *In moments when he feels he cannot die,*
> *And knows himself no vision to himself,*
> *Nor the high God a vision, nor that one*
> *Who rose again."*

He who would set aside this judgment of the great poet, expressed in private conversation as well as in immortal verse, must at least give some better defense of his scepticism than an account of the processes by which forsooth he holds that our religious instincts came to us.

To insist, then, that the impulse to pray is merely the outcome of fear, of the sense of weakness and of dependence in the presence of the overpowering forces of earth and sea, of storm and flood, of cold and heat, of

> *"The silence that is in the starry sky,*
> *The sleep that is among the lonely hills;"*

that these formidable elements were personified, that man tried to win their favour and to propitiate them, when they seemed to threaten; and that these fancies and forebodings, becoming habitual, persisted from generation to generation and were thus ingrafted on the nature of the organism as a part of its furnishings for the struggle of life—is, after all, however inadequate this account, to prove nothing against the

validity of our highest aspirations, except upon the monstrous assumption that all this merely *happened* gratuitously, and was not an adjustment to reality, an assumption that would be equally applicable to the history of those senses that have to do with the common routine of life, and would make them quite as untrustworthy.

If a superior authority cannot be established on the basis of their origin for those powers which bring us into touch with the material world, neither can such claims for them be vindicated on the ground of their nature. Those who are disposed to be sceptical can in this field find abundant opportunities to employ their methods. Much as the various schools of philosophy differ, they are for the most part in agreement that "things are not what they seem," even in the realm of physics. Indeed, science, starting with the data which are given by the eye and the ear and the other organs of the body, has proved that reality is very different from our naïve first impressions of it thus gained.

One beholds a green tree. What has happened? Rays of light, consisting of vibrations of ether, were sent out from the sun and some of them fell upon the tree; of these, part were absorbed, and those that give this colour to the tree were reflected; of the latter, some entered the human eye and threw an image upon the sensitive retina, from whence an impulse was carried over the optic nerve to a certain surface of the brain, and somehow a sensation of vision came to the mind (so substantially, Lord Balfour, *The Foundations of Belief*, pp. 108 f.). Thus the colour is not strictly in the thing at all. And the nervous impulse which goes to the brain is neither the thing seen nor

even the image of the thing. Indeed the final effect seems to depend upon the part of the brain that receives the message, and Professor William James has, I think, somewhere suggested that if the auditory nerves could be connected with the visual surface we might see with our ears.

Information obtained through the other sense organs involves a similarly complicated process. But this is enough to show that our knowledge of the external world is not an easy thing to explain, instinctive and natural as it is to us. Indeed there are as many methods of dealing with this problem as there are great schools of metaphysics. We are sure that we deal with reality in the physical world, and we are right. Yet physicists find the ultimate constituent of this reality in negative electrons which it is impossible to see and which with a central positive nucleus form systems like that of the sun and the planets—the infinitesimal atoms.

However that may be, we surely have a right to believe what we see with our eyes and hear with our ears. Indeed, there is nothing else to do. We cannot permanently doubt the truthfulness of our own natures, for that doubt would destroy itself. The ultimate outcome of such a doubt is solipsism, which no one accepts. The out-and-out Pyrrhonist, who attempts to prove by reason that reason cannot be trusted, at least confutes himself. The more powerful his dialectics, the more worthless they are, for they prove their own worthlessness. Our subjective certitude touching the reliability of that nature of which we are a part, has a strength which laughs at fears and scoffs at questionings, and which indeed bears no proportion to the reasons which we can give for it or the

causes which on naturalistic hypotheses have produced it. This very fact, Lord Balfour argues, is proof that these irrational antecedents to which materialistic philosophy traces back our faculties of observation and knowledge, are wholly inadequate to produce them and must have been controlled and directed toward this high goal. "If intellectual values are to be maintained, the reality of spiritual guidance thus becomes, in my view, the most important of our fundamental assumptions" (*Theism and Thought,* p. 229). But if we trust the constitution of the world and of our own being in these least things, we must not deny it a similar confidence concerning the things which are greatest.

For the rest, it is thus obvious that there is no guarantee against error in the sphere of sense impressions, just as there is not in the higher realm of values. No doubt our religious intuitions at their best are only approximately pure and need to be cleared of dross and alloy. But the possibility of mistakes and blunders is characteristic of all things human, even of our simplest perceptions. A defective eye will see a distorted image. The same object will look large to a spectator close at hand and small to one at a distance. What appears to human vision as a minute point of light is in reality a gigantic sun or perhaps a nebula in which our whole solar system could be lost.

When a new star suddenly bursts into view, the meaning of the phenomenon may perhaps be that thousands of years ago a celestial catastrophe took place in remote space and that rays from the illumination, after travelling through the void for centuries, have at last reached us. But we are so familiar with facts like these that we make the necessary correc-

tions, if we have data to do so, and do not cease to trust our own powers. Nay, the recognition of our own error is a step towards its elimination and proves that the mind, though not infallible, is essentially sound and sane. Dr. Samuel Johnson once had what may have been a slight stroke of paralysis, from which, however, he seems to have quite recovered. He awoke in the night, unable to speak and afraid that his intellect might be affected. He wrote afterwards to Mrs. Thrale, " I was alarmed and prayed God that however He might afflict my body, He would spare my understanding. This prayer, that I might try the integrity of my faculties, I made in Latin verse. The lines were not very good, but I knew them not to be very good: I made them easily, and concluded myself to be unimpaired in my faculties " (*Boswell's Johnson,* Everyman's Library Edition, Vol. II, p. 474).

The ground of confidence thus was not merely the ability to make Latin verse. If this were all, some abatement must have been allowed for inferior quality. There was a further reason for assurance. That he could detect this inferiority and was not deceived by it—this made him certain that his thinking processes were normal. Just so in our knowledge of the external world, and in the intuitions of our religious natures, there is always some mixture of error, but this does not shut us up in utter darkness and make progress an evanescent dream, as long as we can test our own conclusions, in good measure discover our own blunders, come closer and closer to the truth, and can in addition profit by the mistakes of those who have gone before and make use of the treasures of wisdom which they have garnered. It is, however, to be observed that this need of sifting to separate the

wheat from the chaff is not peculiar to the harvests gathered in the fields of beauty and of duty, but cannot be evaded in any region of our being. If the ideals of conscience must be rejected because it is not infallible, so by the same token must all science be discarded and we must confess that black night has settled down upon us.

But one more point may be urged by those who doubt the validity of prayer with its implications as to a spiritual world from which responses come. It may be said that our religious values differ widely from our sense impressions in the nature of their object; that the latter deal with things and the former only with meanings; that the one is objective in its reference and the other a subjective reaction. "Values concern man's response to, and estimation of, things" (Sellars, *Evolutionary Naturalism,* p. 342). These, therefore, it is alleged, cannot have the authority and validity which belongs to perceptions of fact.

That a real difference is here indicated is not to be denied. I shall not rest the case on the affirmation that men do have fellowship with God as genuine as that of man with man and which makes them as sure of His presence as of that of an earthly friend, though I think it is true. Such experiences of lofty souls are not for all, even if those to whom they have been granted have a confidence which nothing can shake. It is better to stand upon ground trodden by the feet of the common people who rarely share the ecstatic experience of the saints.

Let it be noted, then, that if in these higher regions we deal with meanings rather than facts, it is only for the sake of the meanings that we care for the facts. If we could apprehend things apart from any values

attaching to them—which is doubtless an impossibility —they would be absolutely useless, for to assert that anything has uses is to claim value for it. We have no other interest in phenomena than this. In fact, it is hard to express in language any personal relation to our environment except in terms which imply worth for us or for other beings. Probably such estimates are in great part individual, but there underlies them, at least in the greater matters, a sense of universality, the conviction that what is priceless to us must be so to others and is so to the " God of things as they are."

It cannot be conceded, then, that our values are subjective, in the unqualified sense of the term. They are internal, of course, belonging to the world of thought. They are not forced upon us by government or by society, but are written on our own hearts. But they do not rest upon our own individual authority. They are not created by our whims and changeable at our wills. They have an objective reference. Though our own consciousness is their home, it may be said that we recognize their existence rather than that we produce them. There is a standard, and we did not set it up ourselves, though we find it within and its apprehension may be progressive.

This may be illustrated in the field of esthetics. The painter, the sculptor, the musician and the poet introduce us to a world of beauty, and about the highest praise that we can give to them is to say that they have almost reached the ideal. Great thoughts of great poets are quoted and become current coin of intellectual exchange because they have expressed in winged words conceptions of truth which common men have been dimly feeling after. How often in listening to the music of the masters does one half feel as if he

had heard it before, so elemental, so essentially right, does it seem.

A criticism of Gœthe by Wordsworth was that his verse was "not inevitable enough," and Matthew Arnold agrees that the English bard at his best does have the quality which he thought the German lacked—as if the lines had been given to him, not written by him. This high characteristic of spontaneity, of inspiration, in which nature itself seems to speak, belongs to much of the best art, to the songs of Schubert, to the pictures of Raphael. We say they are nearly perfect, as though measuring them by a standard.

Professor Cairns, in a striking passage concerning the differences in different ages, of the sculptures in the gallery of Athens, says, "Now, does the fact that the Greek sense of beauty fluctuated imply that beauty is a purely subjective thing—that there is nothing in the world without corresponding to the artistic vision? I should say rather that you cannot understand the supreme works of the Greek masters (or any of the great masters of beauty) unless you recognize that there is an objective standard of beauty which does not change, and which is embodied in the works of the great Athenian prime more perfectly than in the primitive and later conventional sculpture. Something eternal in us recognizes the eternal in the world without" (*The Reasonableness of the Christian Faith*, p. 36).

All this is still more emphatically true of our ethical and religious values. Two things won the abiding reverence of the great Kant, the starry heavens above and the moral law within. Apparently he thought the one as permanent and immovable as the other. This moral law has its throne in our conscience, but it is not our creation nor does it rest upon our authority. We

feel its right to command even when we do not like what it requires. And when we have defied it we are conscious that we have let the lower overcome the higher. In this fact of a law within us but not subject to our caprice nor deriving its validity from us, Dr. Martineau found proof of the existence of God as a moral governor from whom this august power comes (*Types of Ethical Theory,* Vol. II, p. 79, *et passim*), and his argument is not easy to confute.

It does not follow that our ethical ideas and our other values must be static. "Following the suggestion afforded by the growing organism, we may regard the changes in moral codes as the necessary expression of a developing human society which becomes progressively aware of the true needs and values of life (Everett, *Moral Values,* p. 326). In morality, as in knowledge, we are the "heirs of all the ages," and ought to learn from the experience of those who have gone before. It takes an extraordinary man to be much in advance of his age, and it is not fair to apply to the childhood of the race standards to which we, with all the light that shines from the past, have in these last times only gradually attained. I cannot indeed think that our ideas of right and wrong had a beginning which is quite as primitive as it is sometimes represented.

The attempt to derive these from original instincts developing under the influence of public opinion and the customs of society, though supported by the weighty authority of Dr. McDougall (*Social Psychology,* p. 209 ff.) is quite unconvincing, except as we think of this evolution as under a higher guidance by which new elements were introduced. For the conception of duty is surely unique, and when it first

dawned, whether in a moment or during the course of ages, there was a distinct step on the path of progress, a fresh start, a light in the darkness like "another morn, risen on mid-noon." But that endowment needed experience and social contact to awaken its dormant possibilities. The fact, then, that the goal is still ahead does not mean that there is no goal or only one that is shadowy and unreal. It implies rather that this ideal is so high, so distant, as to leave room for all the advances of a growing and sensitive conscience.

If it be objected that we require some more concrete objective here on earth, the answer is that progress itself has provided such an objective. How do we know what is the ideal of beauty in the plastic arts? We are sure that we have an approach to that ideal in those who by the common consent of all competent lovers of beauty, have given it the most enduring and worthy expression in marble or on canvas, the great Greeks, the great Italians, the great Flemings, such men as Phidias, Michael Angelo and Rembrandt. Is there any ideal of perfection in music? There is. And we look for the closest approximation to it, not in the beating of the tom-tom by African savages, not in what is scarcely superior—the "rag-time" and "jazz" that some Americans call music—but in the works of the masters whose excellence all acclaim, in Bach and Beethoven and Wagner. Where shall we find an approach to the ideal of duty? Not in those who are in this matter at a low stage of development or who are negligent of the claims of right, but in those who, it is generally agreed, have been most attentive to the higher call and most obedient to it, in the prophets, the apostles, the saints and martyrs, whose goodness

has been acknowledged even by their enemies—above all in that supreme Man whose life after nineteen centuries of the closest scrutiny stands unchallenged as the one life without a flaw. There are, then, objective standards of ethical and other values, and we cannot but think that all beauty, all truth, all goodness, dwell in absolute perfection in Him who is the Father of our spirits.

Our faith, then, in the validity of prayer—which means that there are spiritual realities that correspond to it—is at bottom faith that this is a sane and not a mad world, that nature is honest and does not deceive us, or, as all this really implies, that the Creator is a God of Truth. "This dual conviction rests on the axiom that we must accept as veracious the immediate depositions of our own faculties, and that the postulates without which the mind cannot exert its activities at all possess the highest certainty" (Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory,* p. 9). Matthew Arnold finely says of Sophocles, "He saw life steadily and saw it whole."

All that is asked by those who defend the trustworthiness of our religious intuitions is that we be allowed to see life whole, that if we accept the testimony of our senses as to the external world we shall also trust those values which we instinctively put higher, which carry an equal degree of certitude, and which have in their own way an objective reference inexplicable unless they emanate from the Father of All. "There is no more reason," says a contemporary theologian, "from the point of view of religious experience, to adopt an agnostic or subjectivist interpretation of the object of religious experience, than there is, from the point of view of sense-experience, to

adopt an agnostic or subjectivist interpretation of the objects of sense-perception. No better reason can be given for reducing theology to the psychology of religion than can be given for reducing physics and chemistry to the psychology of sense-experience. As we cannot maintain the physical life without acting on the assumption that our realistic intuition as to physical objects is essentially true, so neither can we maintain the religious life without acting on the assumption that our realistic religious intuition with reference to the divine is essentially true" (*Theology as an Empirical Science,* Douglas Clyde Macintosh, Ph.D., p. 32).

III

THE GOD OF PRAYER

"Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet. . . .
And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He?"

—TENNYSON.

"Was wär' ein Gott, der nur von aussen stiesse,
Im kreis das All am Finger laufen liesse?
Ihm ziemt's, die Welt im Innern zu bewegen,
Natur in Sich, Sich in Natur zu hegen,
So dass, was in Ihm lebt und webt und ist,
Nie Seine Kraft, nie Seinen Geist vermisst."

—GŒTHE.

SOME one once said to Frederick W. H. Myers, "If you could ask the Sphinx but one question, and be sure of an answer, what would it be?" His reply was, "Is the universe friendly?" (Quoted by Dean Charles H. Brown, *Why I Believe in Religion,* p. 4). This is the fundamental problem of religion and indeed of life. Unless we can with confidence give an affirmative answer, prayer is futile and our spiritual aspirations are doomed to hopeless defeat. It is true that there has sometimes been a kind of worship of gods that were thought to be hostile and malevolent, gloating over the sufferings of men, and so, costly sacrifices and humble supplications were regarded as

necessary to turn aside the wrath that took delight in crushing insolence. Such caricatures of true devotion bear testimony to our deep need and to our estrangement from Him in whom we live and move and have our being, but they are the manifestation of the type of piety which Browning's Caliban displayed:

> *"He doth His worst in this our life,*
> *Giving just respite lest we die through pain,*
> *Saving last pain for worst—with which an end.*
> *Meanwhile the best way to escape His ire*
> *Is, not to seem too happy."*

But sincere, intelligent reverence insists, as the condition of its own existence, upon two essential truths. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Heb. 11:6). The existence of God and His friendliness, these are two presuppositions without which, definitely understood or at least dimly apprehended, the devout life cannot have its first feeble beginnings. In the previous chapter chief stress was laid upon the validity of our religious values, and the implication which they carry that there is an eternal Spirit of truth and beauty and goodness from whom all these supreme values flow, was only touched upon in passing. It must now be affirmed with the greatest emphasis and most rigidly held, that our spiritual intuitions and ideals are nothing, are as deceptive and deadly as the will-o'-the-wisp that lures the traveller into the swamp or as the mirage that holds before the wanderer in the desert the false prospect of abundant water, unless the reality in which these intuitions and ideals rest is a personal Spirit with whom our spirits can have communion.

It is indeed astonishing that some great thinkers

have apparently believed in the possibility of retaining the fruits of the higher life, when they have cut the tap-root which nourishes them. Religion, according to such speculators, has played and still plays an essential function in man's struggle for existence, but whether it has any ethereal values is open to doubt. Thus that extremely able philosopher Höfding, maintains that "the fundamental axiom of religion, that which expresses the innermost tendency of all religions, is the axiom of the conservation of value" (*Philosophy of Religion,* p. 209 *et passim*). But he refuses to commit himself to the affirmation of human immortality or, so far as I can see, of a God who is real and personal. Nevertheless, the essence of religion is this faith that values will be conserved. But what justification can there be for such confidence? Values can exist only for thinking beings. In whose keeping are they placed for future ages?

Now, there may seem to be a certain nobility in forgetting one's own fate and rejoicing in the assurance that the ideals for which one has lived will survive in other hearts, if he himself must perish. The future is not altogether dark to those who can cherish at least the hope of George Eliot:

> *"O may I join the choir invisible*
> *Of those immortal dead who live again*
> *In minds made better by their presence: live*
> *In pulses stirred to generosity,*
> *In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn*
> *For miserable aims that end with self."*

This is immortality of a sort, though it would not have satisfied Job nor Browning's Cleon. But we must concede that as long as men survive on earth this poor consolation may be cherished. Even the saints are

comforted by the thought that their works do follow them.

But what folly is it to talk of this as a way in which values will be conserved if there is no personal immortality and no personal God! We are placed on this little planet in the vast universe and we cannot change our abode. If there are other worlds in space on which intelligent creatures live we cannot know it and cannot in any case be sure that our highest ideals rule there, unless these ideals, emanating from their Creator and ours, have a universal validity. This earth, then, is the only place where, so far as on this hypothesis we can be certain, these preeminent values which are the heart of religion can be perpetuated. They cannot outlive the human race.

But what, according to the teachings of science, is to be the ultimate destiny of this globe? It may be a fit dwelling-place for man during long ages to come—but not forever. I rather think those are few who expect present mundane conditions, or conditions approximately similar, to be eternal. A collision with some other heavenly body might produce a celestial catastrophe such as may have caused in the past the sudden appearance of what seemed to be new stars. If the solar system escapes these cataclysms, a slow but inexorable fate probably awaits it, like that which has already overtaken the moon. It is like a clock running down, though some think there is recuperating power in radio-activity. The internal fires of the earth will grow cold. Its diurnal rotation will become slower through the influence of the tides. The sun itself, after long eons, will cease to give out light and heat. Life, vegetable and animal, on our planet must succumb, and it will be left dark and cold, the oceans,

for all we know, frozen solid, the atmosphere perhaps undergoing the same process, and this once pleasant home of life will roll along on its gloomy orbit, dreary and desolate, a graveyard that cannot be called God's acre because there is no God. How, then, will these priceless values be conserved?

Again and again have discouraging times come in the world's history when it seemed as if all the costly gains of the past would be dashed to pieces like a child's toy. The greatest souls indeed have been hopeful in spite of circumstances, and we, as we look back over the records of the past, can recognize a steady progress which has marched on in the face of temporary defeats. During the disheartening days of the Civil War, James Russell Lowell, it is said, would look at his rows of books filled with the wisdom of the master spirits of the ages, and would wonder whether all the aspirations and passions, the intuitions and fancies and gentlenesses of the poets and orators and philosophers and saints were to be brought to nothing. In the tragic years from 1914 to 1918 there were many that felt similar fears for civilization itself. Now all have taken courage again and are expecting the race to go on to higher goals.

But the worst forebodings of the friends of humanity in the gloomiest hours have no colours black enough to paint the picture which this view presents. In the course of ages the race may still move onward, but its final goal is stark annihilation. All the noble creations of the thinker, the artist and the musician, all the stately buildings and marvellous inventions, all the goodness and unselfishness that have produced deeds of heroism, all the love that suffereth long and is kind, even the supreme sacrifice of Calvary—all these are

to end in a dead planet revolving on its lonely way around a darkened sun. To accept it as the truth that nature is so meaningless, so false—that it tantalizes us with high aspirations only to crush them, demands extreme credulity. I am too sceptical to assent to it. With Lord Bacon, "I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind" (*Essays, Atheism*).

> *"Spin, spin, Clotho, spin,*
> *Lachesis twist, Atropos sever.*
> *Strong is death and strong is sin,*
> *But only God endures forever."*
>
> —LOWELL.

The reason, then, for holding that our highest ideals may be trusted, are reasons also for holding that God is. But the further issue is all important for the devotional life—is He a rewarder of them that seek after Him? What kind of a God is He? At this stage of the discussion we must depend upon the religious instinct itself for the answer. If its teachings are valid and give us any clue to reality, He is such a God as will satisfy the thirst of our souls, such a God as will respond to our deepest cravings, in a word, a God to whom we can pray.

Our religious values demand a God that is accessible. He must be "a very present help in trouble." Even if the origin of the physical universe could be satisfactorily explained—as it cannot—by assuming that there was a great First Cause who created matter and set it in motion, thereupon leaving the forces that He had called into being to take their own course, our heart hunger cannot be appeased by the thought of "an absentee God, sitting idle, ever since the first

Sabbath, at the outside of His universe, and seeing it go" (Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus,* p. 96). Deism is, at best, a poor and beggarly philosophy, but worse than this, it makes impossible that fellowship with the divine and that gracious assistance in time of need for which our souls yearn and to which the experience of multitudes gives testimony.

For if prayer is meaningless unless there be a God who can answer, it is equally meaningless, if He is so distant that our cries cannot reach Him. If that be true, nature laughs at our hopes and taunts us with a mockery like that of Elijah on Mt. Carmel, "Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked" (I Kings 18:27). But men in their hours of real worship rise superior to the hard commonplace of their surroundings. We cannot see God with our eyes. We cannot hear His voice. We cannot have our scepticism dissipated by a touch as could doubting Thomas. But faith insists that He is present, and that He, the unseen and intangible, is "closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet."

He cannot be kept out of His world. What are the invariable operations of nature, but His regular working on the material plane? He rules the movements of the stars in their courses by an intelligence which makes them in a measure intelligible to us; He rules, too, in those little systems that we call atoms. One may be permitted to doubt whether there is any such thing as *blind* force.

> *"But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will than can,*
> *Existent behind all laws, that made them, and lo, they are!"*
>
> —Browning.

The law of evolution does not banish purpose from the universe; rather it shows how inward and persistent that purpose has been. There are certain great chasms on the way by which we have come, that Naturalism has never been able to bridge,—the chasm between inorganic matter and living organisms, the chasm between vegetables and animals, the chasm between the lower animals with their instincts and their rudimentary intelligence, and man with his reason and conscience. These breaks of continuity cannot be explained unless a supreme mind was guiding the whole process.

But it is not merely at these points that we need God. They are only stages at which the failure of the theory that progress is a happy accident becomes manifest to the wayfaring man. Few are so blind as not to see the necessity of divine action at such stopping places; it exists just as truly all along the way. "In him we live and move and have our being." His power is felt in every molecule of matter and in every moment of time. Laws of nature are His methods of procedure. His voice is to be heard in the thunder as the ancients imagined. The earthquake that rocks the mountains, the hurricane and the flood, are commonly reckoned visitations from His hand. It is too often forgotten that the quiet growth of trees and flowers, the singing of birds, the zephyr that brings refreshing coolness, and the gradual ripening of the kindly fruits of the earth, are just as certain and far more constant evidences of His nearness.

"And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

—WORDSWORTH.

But this conception, too, may be carried to an extreme which is as inhospitable to religion as that which it seeks to avoid. If God is immanent in nature in the sense that He manifests Himself through it and in no other way, if He is confined to His universe as in a prison, if His only activity is through second causes, if the world is to Him what the body is to the man—His means of self-expression and His sole means of self-expression—then our religious aspirations are baffled, and in their name we must protest against such a conclusion. In particular, such an identification of the Infinite with His creation as denies to Him the attributes of personality—thought, love, will—or asserts that He rises to self-consciousness only in man and other intelligent beings, really undermines the foundations of worship, though men of the finest character, like Spinoza, have defended such views.

Religion can never be satisfied with a Pantheistic conception of God, because it must be a relation of spirit to Spirit. If there is any reality in prayer, it is an experience in which intelligence speaks to intelligence. You cannot offer petitions to a stream of tendency, even though it makes for righteousness. You cannot present your needs to matter and force and find them a very present help in trouble. You cannot enter into fellowship with the world-soul, if it becomes capable of such communion only in yourself and others like you.

If it be objected that such reasoning brings us to the position that God is altogether such an one as ourselves, I deny the justice of the inference. We reverently confess that His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. Our knowledge is insignificant compared with His omniscience. The deepest and most unselfish human love is but an imperfect beam from the full-orbed love of the Father. Our purposes are vacillating and ineffective, while His great purpose, comprehending all things from the vastest to the most microscopic, never fails. But if it be asseverated that thought and love and will in God are not the same as thought and love and will in us, we must reply that we are not interested in words but in meanings, and that this statement is only another way of saying that God does not have what we call thought and love and will. It is to use these terms in a different sense from that which we understand by them.

If we are to deal in meanings, we must hold that thought in God is in kind the same as thought in us, though in degree, in clearness, in insight, there is an immeasurable difference between our slow blundering reasonings and His direct intuition; we must maintain that love in Him is in kind the same as love in us, though in length and breadth and height and depth it passeth knowledge; we must insist that will in Him is in kind the same as will in us, though in the greatness of its sweep, in the holiness of its aim, and in the wisdom and efficiency of its operation, it is as high above ours as the heavens are above the earth. We cling to this, that personality in God is essentially what it is in us, but in our lives it is dim and inchoate and slowly struggling into maturity while in the eternal Father is is perfect and self-sufficient and self-

contained. With such a Spirit our spirits can speak. To such a God we can pray. Such a Father will hear and answer us.

Furthermore, religion must reject the pantheistic conception of God in the interest of those priceless values which are its supreme concern. If God is all and all is God, then the evil and the good alike come from Him and do His bidding. The saint that lives to help and bless his fellows and the human tiger, drunk with the blood of his fellows, are in the same way and to the same degree servants of God. It is God who works in the philanthropist; it is God also who inspires the thief, the traitor, and the murderer. The statesman who conceives large and beneficent plans to elevate the conditions of men and advance civilization is accomplishing the divine will; but so is also the tyrant that takes malignant pleasure in the suffering of others. If God is all and all is God, then He cannot hate sin, for it is His own deed. He cannot punish the wicked, for that would be to punish Himself.

Of course the origin and the existence of evil is a baffling problem for thinkers of all schools, but the believer in a personal God who chose to limit Himself so far as to create beings endowed with a measure of freedom, can give a reasonable account of the discord which disturbs the harmony of the universe and yet see in the Father in heaven a goodness and holiness and love which is separate from sin and feels the loss it brings. The impersonal Absolute, however, who reaches the level of consciousness only in intelligent creatures, is neither moral nor immoral. The true and the false, the beautiful and the ugly, the pure and the base, all have their place in Him. Nor can it be shown

that this impersonal Absolute allows the evil for the sake of the good, or overrules loss to subserve ultimate gain. In such a God there is no basis for morality or religion.

For who can pray to that world-soul to which our values mean nothing and to which the distinction between right and wrong is a matter of indifference? It is impossible to love and worship Emerson's Brahma:

"If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

"Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanish'd gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.

"They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

"The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven."

Such a God would differ by the whole diameter of being from the Father in heaven of whom Jesus talked. From the point of view of religion there is little to choose between Pantheism and Atheism.

Deism would teach us that God is too far away to hear and answer us; Pantheism that He is incapable of thought or sympathy and indifferent to the values that give meaning to our lives. But between these two extremes and combining the elements of worth in both, is a conception of God which is satisfactory because it presents Him as one to whom we can pray. He is

immanent in the world, upholding and sustaining it, natural law being the ordinary mode of His operation on the physical plane. In Him we live and move and have our being, and so He can be a present help in time of trouble. But He is not bound as a prisoner in His universe. He is transcendent above it, and rules it according to great purposes in which wisdom and goodness and holiness perfectly harmonize. In Him thought answers to our thought, love to our love, will to our will—the Infinite answering to the finite. He is never far from us; He understands our needs; He has all power. He therefore is one whom we can worship and adore.

Can we, on the basis of our religious instincts, go farther than this? Can we, from the distinctive character of our requirements, draw further inferences as to the attributes of the God who answers them? Our sense of dependence calls for a strong arm upon which we can lean. Our helplessness in the presence of the forces of nature in their angry moods, not secure even with all the advances of science that we shall not be crushed by the elements that surround us, may be an argument to prove that God cares for us. Our perplexity in dealing with the problems of life, the narrow limits of our knowledge, the baffling questions about reality which we must ask and cannot answer—all this means that only eternal Wisdom can supply our deficiencies, and that we need a revelation from Him. Our very imperfections and failures are perhaps opportunities for His holiness and goodness to display themselves. Our insatiable wants and our deep spiritual poverty ask for grace and bounty, ask indeed for a Father in heaven. Such has ever been the conviction of prophetic souls.

"Oh, the little birds sang east,
And the little birds sang west—
And I smiled to think God's greatness
Flowed round our incompleteness
Round our restlessness His rest."
—Mrs. Browning.

Nay, we have distempers that are even more serious than these, and which cannot be cured if there is no balm in Gilead, and no physician there. We are sinners. With the first dawning of the sense of moral responsibility we all begin to do things that we ought not to do and to leave undone things that we ought to do. Here is a universal fact, true of all lives except the one perfect life that ended on the cross. Even the best of men carry in their breasts a sense of guilt, of failure to attain their ideals, of living on a low plane, which makes them ready to pronounce their own condemnation. If God is a Father may not our very perverseness offer occasion for the display of His pity? May we not infer from the very ruin wrought by our transgressions that there is a redeeming love which will not let us go? Even if the sufferings of men are largely brought on by themselves, will not the Eternal Himself be afflicted in all their afflictions? Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

Perhaps it may seem that this is too broad a conclusion for the premises upon which we have been proceeding. It must be insisted that on his religious side, man comes in touch with reality. But it is not to be denied that the data must be sifted and only that which is pure and true to our natures retained. Sin, however, is an evil aftergrowth, a perversion, a disease which has fastened itself upon our souls. Those who hold strong ground as to the universal fact of guilt and the tragedy which lies back of it, must be the last

to deny all this. There is no more precious truth than that the love which makes atonement for the unworthy is eternal in the heart of the Father, that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world; but that mystery was unveiled through the historic revelation. That revelation is attested by many infallible proofs—not least by the "heavenliness of the matter." I do not affirm that this intervention was unnecessary, or that the good news could have been discovered in any sufficient way by the light of nature alone. Human experience gives no ground for such a belief.

But there is no slight confirmation of the truth of the Gospel in the fact of its fitness to meet our deepest needs. We want a God who is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto Him. We cannot claim redemption on the ground of right, but we can plead for it on the basis of our loss and our misery. And the pardon of the guilty, though not demanded by justice, is exactly what might be expected from a Father of infinite love. That His pity should equal and even surpass our woe, that His fulness should overflow into our emptiness, that His life should win the victory over our death—this is "too good not to be true."

"So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving, too—
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
Thou hast no power nor mayest conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
And thou must love me who have died for thee!'
The madman saith He said so: it is strange."

—Browning.

IV

PRAYER AS COMMUNION WITH GOD

"And I know such a man (whether in the body or apart from the body, I know not; God knoweth), how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."—St. Paul.

"Jesus, these eyes have never seen
That radiant form of Thine;
The veil of sense hangs dark between
Thy blessed face and mine!

"I see Thee not, I hear Thee not,
Yet art Thou oft with me;
And earth hath ne'er so dear a spot,
As where I meet with Thee."

—Ray Palmer.

THE simplest and most fundamental form of prayer is an experience of companionship with the Father in heaven, a sense of real companionship with a Friend who is unseen but yet present. Such a personal relation is the basis and essence of all worship and supplication. With this it begins; this is the goal for which it strives.

If God is love, if He is rightly called our Father in heaven, we can be sure that He will not only be willing to receive those who call upon Him, but that He will do far more than that. When did genuine affection ever remain passive and wait for the response that it desires? It will take the initiative, it will go more than half way. A mother does not stop to consider whether she owes her absent son a letter. The father

of the Prodigal ran to meet him when he was yet a great way off. It is characteristic of a true heart that it longs to give, that it is patient even with the erring, that it seeks the wanderer and suffers with the afflicted.

Accordingly, the God of holy love must always have been seeking those who would worship Him in spirit and in truth. When men have endeavoured to come to Him, He has always been first drawing them. He has prevented us with His mercy. In every case in which a lost son has searched for the Father's house that Father has really first gone in search of him until He found him. The history of His dealings is the record of His gradual revealing of Himself as men were able to receive the message, here choosing a people to be the channel of a refreshing stream of religious knowledge, here another gifted race to be the teachers of the world's thinkers, here a strong nation to bring order out of chaos and establish law, and among all the families of earth drawing individual men and women into closer fellowship with Himself—until in the fulness of time the Master walked with the common folk of His time, the effulgence of the glory of the Eternal and the very image of His substance, one who, though the humblest of men, could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." God has all along made the advances. It has been the story of "the divine initiative." (The phrase is the title of an admirable volume by Dr. H. R. Mackintosh.) "Give what thou commandest," says Augustine, "and command what thou wilt."

Yet there is a curious fact patent to all, which seems on the surface to contradict this consoling truth—seekers after God have usually laboured and

struggled and found the way difficult. On the heights where we meet with Him the air is pure and serene, but the climb by which those heights are won is often long and hard, so that we are prone to think them unattainable and to dwell content in the valleys. If nature is a revelation of God it is also a veil which conceals Him. The Old Testament, so full of the experiences of the saints, again and again intimates that it cost them dear to approach the divine presence and that they often were ready to despair of reaching the goal. The chief complaint of Job is that God hides Himself, that his own condemnation has been pronounced without a hearing, and that there is no way to reach the judgment seat and present a plea in justification.

> *"Oh that I knew where I might find him!*
> *That I might come even to his seat!*
> *I would set my cause in order before him,*
> *And fill my mouth with arguments. . . .*
> *Behold I go forward, but he is not there;*
> *And backward, but I cannot perceive him;*
> *On the left hand, when he doth work,*
> *But I cannot behold him;*
> *He hideth himself on the right hand,*
> *That I cannot see him."*
>
> —Job 23:3-4, 8-9.

Jeremiah, in a time when the land was blasted by drought, exclaims, "O thou hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in the time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a sojourner in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night."

The same sense of distance from God is frequently confessed by those whose life centred in Him The long conflict in the soul of John Bunyan is well known. The gentle and melancholy Cowper writes:

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

If these men be called morbid and unnatural, this charge will not be made against the robust and optimistic Browning; but in general his feeling in this matter is theirs.

"How very hard it is to be
A Christian. Hard for you and me."

I think it cannot be said that these experiences are abnormal. But why should our fellowship with God be at all difficult of attainment, as if it were a peak to be reached only by an arduous and persevering climb? Is not revelation His manifestation of Himself to men rather than their search for Him? If the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin present His attitude, if He is ever seeking worshippers, if His grace always goes before us, if He comes more than half way to meet us, why is not access to Him so easy and His presence so tangible that there would be no room for doubt and indecision? Why should it even be a task for the intellect to prove His existence? Why should He not appear to men, fair as the moon, clear as the sun and thus confute gainsayers and satisfy the longings of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness?

The answer is to be found in the essential nature of a relation between persons. God takes the initiative, but He must deal with intractable material, or rather

not with material, but with wills. To force them is not to win them; it is to make the winning more difficult. A great religious thinker, R. H. Hutton, has suggested that the influence of overshadowing characters upon us all is enormous. It may be such as to thwart the free play of individuality, to stunt moral growth. We may become mere imitators and our native powers may never be called into full and natural exercise. There have been great teachers whose sway over others was so masterly that gifted students have later felt bound by it and were compelled to break the trammels lest their own minds be kept in restraint. Many of the highest and holiest inspirations of life certainly come from social contacts, but if an ascendancy of too towering a sort be gained over another, it may leave his soul weak and bereft of confidence.

The Father in heaven, then, respects the sacred rights of the personalities that He has created. He deals with us as men, not as things. Our wills must not be coerced, for forcible restraint is not development. He must bear with ignorance, negligence and folly. And He must not allow such burst of splendour, such glimpses of the beatific vision, such lustre of His own glory to be revealed to us as would overwhelm us and leave us without mastery of our own choices. He desires our unforced friendship and worship, therefore He must come to us under an obscuring veil, clouds and darkness must be the habitation of His throne. He must hold before us the lure of the highest things and yet keep them from us until aspiration and longing are awakened. He may often give us gleams of the splendours that await us, and then hide them from us till we seek to win them. And He may perhaps be closest when we despair of seeing Him. The knight

that felt unworthy to see the holy grail was the very one to whom the vision was likely to come. "Where wert thou, Lord," asked Catherine of Siena, "when I was tempted with such impurity?" and the answer was, "In thy heart."

Here, then, is the essential thing in prayer, the foundation upon which all else that it includes is built. There have been multitudes in the past, there are multitudes still living who would insist upon it as a sober fact, that they have had personal relations of fellowship with the Father in heaven. Perhaps we have not made enough, in our systems of Apologetics, of this evidence for the existence of God. Psychology may be quite right in refusing to pass judgment upon the value of such convictions, but it has no right to reject them as deceptive. It limits its field to the human side, views the actions of the mind as phenomena, and declines to assess the worth of their testimony as to external reality. A man who thoroughly mastered the structure and machinery of a telescope, but confined himself strictly to that structure could not tell of the wonders of the heavens, but his denial of their existence would have no weight. An able authority on this subject who strongly insists upon the limitation indicated, puts the following question: "May it, then, perhaps be that the mystics are the seers of our world, and that whenever they open the eyes of their souls, the Eternal Light pours in; and that though we blind ones learnedly describe, generalize, and explain their experience by regular psychological laws which take account only of the psycho-physical organism, still the light is really there and the mystic apprehends it directly, even as he says?" (*The Religious Consciousness,* James Bissett Pratt, p. 458).

To the fact of such companionship honest men have borne witness through the ages. Enoch walked with God, and Abraham was His friend. St. Paul, who was not mad but spoke forth words of truth and soberness, comforted his shipmates in the storm with the assurance, "There stood by me this night an angel of the God whose I am, whom also I serve;" and repeatedly he averred that he had seen Jesus Christ. Here is a lamentation of Augustine, "I have loved Thee late, Thou Beauty, so old and so new; I have loved Thee late! and lo Thou wast within, but I was without and seeking Thee there." So real to Francis of Assisi was the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ that he bore the *stigmata* in his own flesh. Before some of the great crises in the life of Martin Luther he was overheard in prayer talking to God as to a present friend. To Cardinal Newman the being of God was as certain as the certainty of his own existence (*Apologia pro Vita Sua,* p. 241). And innumerable other witnesses to the same experience might be cited.

If these seem ancient or ecclesiastical, let us appeal to one who was modern and a man of the world in the best sense, during most of his life a leading editor in our largest city, a friend and adviser of statesmen and presidents, and liberal in his theological views. Lyman Abbott thus describes his own experience, "He had thought of God as a great king sitting upon a great white throne, and he tried to send his prayers up thither by a kind of wireless telegraphy, though wireless telegraphy was not then known. But now, when he kneels to pray, he first reads something from the Gospels, then forms in his mind a picture of Jesus, sits down by the side of the man and talks with him and

prayer becomes easy conversation" (*What Christianity Means to Me*, p. 7).

It may doubtless be that this close intimacy with the Master, of which the saints often speak, is not for all. There are natures that have a peculiarly rich religious endowment, while with others it is extremely meagre, and most of us are on a comparatively common level, by no means lacking in sensitiveness to spiritual appeals, and yet rarely allowed moments of ecstasy. Not for us, perhaps, is that almost constant feeling of the presence of God which Spurgeon is said to have had, nor do there come to us such days as that in Moody's life when he had to ask God to stay his hand. But souls that live habitually on the plain may sometimes reach the mountain-top. And on the lower level there may be a sacred companionship, which, if it does not transport one into raptures, at least hallows the common way and transfigures the common tasks. And this high friendship is capable of cultivation, for faith in its reality tends to make it real. We must refuse the materialistic view that the things we can see and hear and touch are our only concern. We must believe, and often say to ourselves, that "He is nearer than breathing and closer than hands and feet." And thus with us, too, who may not be gifted with the vision of the mystics, prayer may "become easy conversation."

So basal is this characteristic of true devotion that it may be used as a test to see what is consistent with the spirit of worship. Some years ago there was much discussion of a proposal made, I think, by Professor Tyndall, to attempt a scientific trial of the efficacy of prayer. The plan was that certain selected patients in a hospital should be given the best treatment that medical skill could provide without dependence upon

healing power from above, while for certain others petitions to God should be made, but no help from physicians should be allowed; and it was argued that, if the latter method proved more beneficial than the former, the claims of believers would have been experimentally demonstrated. Of course the proposition was not accepted. Christian people all felt in a vague way that the settlement of a question of faith by such an ordeal was impossible, though some found it difficult to say exactly why.

And that instinctive feeling was right. To put the comradeship which is the essence of prayer under the microscope would be to kill it. An intimate friendship does not thrive, or at least its manifestations are suppressed, if an unsympathetic spectator is noting every word, weighing its significance, and attempting to assess the value of this personal relation in quantitative statements. No mother would be willing that a psychologist should observe her meeting with her son, in order, by testing the reactions, to tell how strong her love is and how much it can accomplish. There are some things too precious to have their worth estimated in dollars and cents, too ethereal to be placed on the scales and computed in ounces and pounds, too delicate to be dissected by the scalpel. The love of God which was exhibited on Calvary produces results that are most real, but they cannot be tabulated in statistical reports. The suppliant who should agree to the conditions of such a contest would by that act lose the spirit of intercession and would surely feel his inability to come with boldness to the throne of grace. Communion with God belongs in a higher realm in which scientific methods of precision are worse than crude and awkward—they are not applicable at all.

It remains to be said that in this celestial region there lurk subtle dangers. When we strive after an actual experience of God's presence, when we essay to break the bonds of the hard material world and to touch those realities which are unseen and eternal, we are on a quest in which many have preceded us, the select company of the mystics. They have not been found exclusively in any one nation, in any one age, or among the devotees of any one religion, but their roll would include the names of ancient Greeks, of East Indians, and of Europeans, mediæval and modern. They have professed various faiths, but there is something unique and distinctive in Christian mysticism. Doubtless every true Christian is in some sense, at some times, a mystic, but not every mystic is a Christian.

If the method of contemplation is that by which the realm of unseen realities is sought, if the new relation to which the soul aspires is not recognized as a sacred fellowship between a finite personal spirit and the supreme personal spirit, if it be not mediated through the life and redemption of the Lord Jesus, if the result is a withdrawal from human contact in the arena where the immortal crown is to be won not without dust and blows—then these objectionable features are likely to show themselves.

The great word of this mysticism is renunciation. It is dissatisfied with the earthly and the earth. It strives to escape from them. Its goal can be defined only by contrast with the things which seem to it so ephemeral and so disappointing here. Release from pain and sorrow, from the desire in which they are rooted, from aspiration and longing of all kinds, even from thought itself, is the aim set before the soul.

All these are pronounced empty and vain, and the upward way is the way of complete nullification of them. Even Christian devotion sometimes holds similar language. "Oh to be nothing, nothing—" these words of high consecration cannot be accepted without explanation and qualification, and indeed their connection shows that they were not meant to be taken too literally.

Renunciation, to be sure, is demanded in any life whose aims are high, but it is of no value in itself. The unworthy must be put aside for the sake of that which is beyond price, the mean for the sake of the fine, that which passeth away for the sake of that which abideth forever. Unless such a purpose be in view renunciation is an utterly negative and barren thing which can only weaken and starve the spirit. When such a goal is set before us we can sympathize with the impatience of Faust.

"Entbehren sollst du! Sollst entbehren
Das ist der ewige Gesang
Der jedem an die Ohren klingt
Den unser ganzes Leben lang
Uns heiser jede Stunde singt."

An immortal can never discover the source of contentment in negation.

The ultimate prospect which such mysticism holds before men comes, in its last analysis, to nothingness. Only dialectics which can "distinguish and divide a hair 'twixt north and northwest side" can discern much difference between Nirvana and annihilation. The world is nothing, and the one thing that can be said of the final state that rewards the devotee is that it is not the world. Freedom from all desire, all suf-

fering, all motions of the will, even all thought, which is described as the way of escape from present unrealities, must be equivalent to the cessation of the activities of personality. The flight from the nothingness of earthly things leads to an eternity of nothingness, for the denial of nothing is itself nothing (Cf. Royce, *The World and the Individual,* Lecture IV). This ideal, to which many earnest spirits whose thinking is essentially pessimistic have been devoted, turns out to be absolutely devoid of content. Such tendencies are latent even in some speculations that are called Christian.

It is evident that the implications of such a conception of the higher life must be ultimately hostile to religion, for it means the abandonment of the idea of personality in God and at last in ourselves. He is the absolute, the undefinable, the illimitable, concerning whom no affirmations can be made. It is insisted that He is without limitation, but that thought is a limitation, will is limitation, the existence of any creatures who are not in some sense Himself is limitation. Hermann, who, like the Ritschlians in general, is a drastic critic of mysticism, says that its presentation of the eternal shows us " not the living God of revelation, but only a being of whom nothing more can be said than that He is not the world " (*Communion with God,* p. 323).

As for man, the haven of his whole storm-tossed voyage is absorption in this undefinable, illimitable, Absolute, beyond the reach of desire and will and thought. It would be impossible to conceive of an idea farther removed from the thought of a glorious fellowship of the finite with the infinite person which is the basis of all intelligent worship. But a com-

munion with God which is distinctively Christian has in its own essential nature the cure for the maladies to which mysticism is exposed.

Because, first of all, the Christian thought of God is formed by the Christ of the gospels. He is the unique manifestation of God and the key to the knowledge of Him. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." This fact has often been remarked, sometimes as a reproach to the Church, sometimes as a commendation. Really it is a truth in which to rejoice. "It is Christ rather than God," observes John Stuart Mill, "whom Christianity has held up to believers as the pattern of perfection for humanity" (*Three Essays on Religion,* p. 253). Mr. H. G. Wells puts a similar statement into the mouth of Mr. Brittling. And Hermann declares, "It is truer to say that we find in God Himself nothing but Christ" (*Op. Cit.,* p. 32). In this human life was the effulgence of His glory and the very image of His substance. It is the God who made Himself known under human conditions in Jesus that can truly awaken the adoration and the affection.

For love and loyalty demand the concrete rather than the abstract. We can have no companionship with a definition. The conception of an infinite spirit, without bodily parts or members, is hard for us to understand and harder to make a real force that will sway our lives. The contemplation of such a being may easily become hazy and lead to pantheistic abstractions which can never be real objects of intelligent worship. But before God manifest in the flesh we are ready to bow in reverence and yield our loyalty and love. "God the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception: but the

crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds.

"It was before deity embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the synagogue, and the doubts of the academy, and the fasces of the lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust" (Macaulay, *Essay on Milton,* Miscellanies, p. 164). It is not difficult to think of friendship with God if He is like the Jesus of the gospels, for it is a fellowship with a person who deals with us as persons and whose every trait inspires love and confidence, even while it rebukes meanness and sin.

But the true Christian mysticism escapes these dangers because of another feature which belongs to its essence. It is social in its nature. The sphere in which it lives is the Kingdom of God. One cannot pray the Lord's Prayer without thinking of others and associating with them at the throne of grace. Indeed, it is true of all our outward acts of devotion that their effect, instead of being hindered, is rather helped and deepened where two or three are gathered together. No man can grow in grace unless he often retire to his closet, shut the door, and pray to the Father who is in secret; yet united petition has a momentum and weight which comes from the touch of soul upon soul. Even in the silence of Quaker meetings, often so very impressive upon mere spectators, the power of social worship is felt. There is a great loss to the spirit of devotion, if one has never felt the thrill of approaching to God with a group of like-minded seekers or in the great congregation.

Furthermore, there is a corrective to the evils of mysticism in the social emphasis of the Christian message, because it teaches that the natural and, indeed, inevitable outcome of the right sort of fellowship with God is a life of service among men. The disciples who were with the Lord on the mount of transfiguration immediately followed Him to the plain, where the crowd waited to present to Him a pitiful case of human suffering. And it is characteristic of the New Testament ideal that it keeps the highest raptures of the mystic sane by directing the spiritual power thus released, into practical channels, and that it elevates and transfigures the common round of duty by the thought of the nearness of the Master. The model of this highest saintliness was exhibited by Jesus in the days of His flesh when He spent nights of prayer to make ready for days of toil. St. Paul, who was caught up to the third heaven, will hardly be called visionary or impractical by anyone who has read his masterly directions to the churches or the records of his stupendous labours and achievements. St. Francis had visions of the highest, but he served among the lowly. Brother Lawrence practiced the presence of God, but said that he experienced that presence as much when at work in the kitchen amid the noise of pots and pans, as when on his knees before the holy sacrament. And in general this combination of heavenly ecstasy with earthly endeavour has been characteristic of really Christian devotion, at least at its highest and purest, in all ages of the Church and in all its different divisions.

Now this social aspect of the redeemed life is surely the best antidote for those distempers into which mysticism has sometimes fallen. There is a subtle egoism,

an absorption of the soul in its own destiny, even in the longing to escape from desire, will, and thought, even in the passionate renunciation which longs to be nothing, nothing. One has certainly reached a higher stage on the upward way when he can forget self, though presented in the form of the annihilation of self. To seek to help others and to glorify God tends to divert one's thoughts from one's own happiness, cunningly disguised though that thought may be under the names of abnegation and suppression, and to induce one to regard it as a side issue which is not of supreme importance, if only the goal can be attained. It is the highest of all mysticism which expresses itself in such words as these, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—and, if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Exodus 32:32). "For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kindred according to the flesh" (Romans 9:3). Without the steadying influence of such lofty altruism the mystic quest may be unreal, morbid, even pathological.

"In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,
Fashion'd by Merlin ere he passed away,
And carven with strange figures; and in and out
The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll
Of letters in a tongue no man could read.
And Merlin called it 'The Siege Perilous,'
Perilous for good and ill; 'for there,' he said,
'No man could sit but he should lose himself.'
And once by misadvertance Merlin sat
In his own chair, and so was lost; but he,
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,
Cried, 'If I lose myself, I save myself!'"

—TENNYSON.

V

PRAYER AS PETITION

"When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
Did I say 'without friend?'
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe presst!
Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
So, I was afraid!"

—BROWNING.

"The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working."—ST. JAMES.

THAT, whatever else it is, prayer in its deepest aspect is a fellowship of love between God and man, a blessed communion between the infinite personal Spirit and a finite spirit whom He has called into being, will hardly be disputed by any who believe in the religious life and its implications. But is it a real power in the world? Does it produce results? Does it so influence the course of events that, because of it, things come to pass which would not have occurred without it?

There have been thoughtful men of saintly character who have held indeed that prayer is high converse with the Father in heaven, that it has most significant consequences for our own minds and hearts, transforming

them into the likeness of the risen Christ, and who have sincerely cultivated the habit of presenting their supplications to the throne, but who nevertheless insist that its meaning is exhausted in its subjective effects, and that it never has place as a cause among the sequences of the material world. That there would still be unexplored remainders in the realm of intercourse with God and that in these would be found the abiding values of life, even if no results could be felt on the level of physical phenomena, I strongly believe. But the loss would be great, and that loss would not be confined to a failure to get answers that were tangible, but would react upon all aspects of our devotional practice.

It seems certain that this idea that prayer cannot produce objective results, but that its whole worth is to be sought in the mind of the suppliant, is not the one generally presented in the Bible. Though one should hold the lowest views of inspiration—as I do not—one must at least admit that here is a book full of marvellous experiences of men who knew God face to face, and who could therefore tell us much of what intercession means. And their representation is that they made requests for definite things which were granted, or in some cases withheld—things which were concrete and often material. Hanna prayed for a child and Samuel was born. Elijah prayed that it might not rain, and it rained not for three years and six months. Hezekiah craves restoration from sickness and fifteen years are added to his life. And when the desired boon is refused, the saints regard the matter as a sorrow and a problem. To Jeremiah the drought seemed like an indication that Jehovah was a stranger in the land and a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night. St. Paul besought the Lord thrice that the thorn in the

flesh might depart from him, and seemed to be satisfied with the subjective effect only after a revelation had made the purpose clear.

Above all, this doctrine of prayer is hard to reconcile with the teachings and practice of the Lord Jesus. Even those who take the low view—as I do not—of His person and His mission, will almost without exception grant that He knew in its heights and depths what supplication to God means. He recognized that sometimes the exact thing asked could not be given, as when in His hour of agony He said, " Not what I will, but what thou wilt." But He talked of a faith that could remove mountains. He spoke of conquests over the power of evil which could be won only by prayer and fasting. His many miracles, the accounts of which cannot be explained away, were changes in the external world, achieved through fellowship with God, or they were nothing. The great charter of prayer is this, " Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish will give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? " Matthew 7:7-11 (Cf. Luke 11:9-13).

Furthermore, popular opinion, which, if it be found to be spontaneous and general, is a good indication of what our religious natures demand, certainly refuses to limit prayer in this way. The common man thinks of it as a means whereby he may gain divine help in the

defeats and difficulties of life; indeed there are many who neglect to visit their closets and perhaps affect to doubt the utility of appeals to heaven until adversity overtakes them, and then they cry to God in their trouble. In their hearts they believe that the Father can subdue adverse forces and remove barriers from the way, and in times of need these deep convictions regain control. They make it a matter of complaint that their supplications often seem to have no effect. Even Carlyle, in one of his gloomy moods, bitterly exclaimed, "He doesn't do anything." And these instinctive clamours will not be silenced by saying that it is enough to know the Lord and to be with Him, to be sharers of His purposes and reconciled to things as He orders them.

There is thus reason to believe that the more primitive aspect of supplication, the earliest to develop in the individual and perhaps the race, is this use of it to meet poignant wants, and that the mystic vision, the experience of the divine presence, though deepest in significance and fundamental to all else, is rather the goal toward which the experience of succour in distress leads. And that the former, even if it be regarded as preliminary and on a lower level, is essential to the full idea of prayer is confirmed by the pragmatic consideration that without it the devotional spirit could hardly survive.

If men in general were convinced that their appeals for help were never answered by changes in the material world, by snatching them from "the fell clutch of circumstance," or by shielding them from the "bludgeoning of chance," even though they could be assured of a high and blessed fellowship with the Father and a consequent growth in holy character,

would not the result be that worship in all its forms would wither and die? However real may be the raptures of the saints, the things that press upon most hearts are the problems connected with the common tasks and the daily round. It is in these ordinary duties, often monotonous enough, but which must be met to supply the simplest wants, that assistance from above is needed, and the conviction is strong that intervention cannot be real unless it can produce results in the hard world of things in which our difficulties arise.

A doctrine of prayer whose acceptance would tend to destroy prayer is under self-evident condemnation. I think indeed that even if such a view prevailed men would still lift up holy hands unto God, because native impulses are stronger than arguments, the heart can overrule the head, and the thirst for God would seek the living waters; but neglect would be easier and more general, and the practice, where it did prevail, would naïvely contradict the conclusions to which the reason had come and would lead the petitioners implicitly to beg that God would control the blind forces that threaten. However baffling the questions that arise, we must insist that intercession to the Father brings to pass results which otherwise would have failed.

But it is manifest that when we take this advanced position, we must face some of the most perplexing problems of human thought. And with certain of these we must now grapple. The objections to the possibility of prayer in this aspect of it are, of course, numerous, but can, I think, be comprehended in three groups; which are based respectively on the Vastness of the Creation, the Will of God, and the Order of the Universe.

PART II

PROBLEMS OF PRAYER

VI

THE PLACE OF PRAYER IN THE VAST CREATION

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

—TENNYSON.

"The very law that moulds a tear
And bids it trickle from its source
That law preserves the earth a sphere
And guides the planets in their course."

THE ancient fable of Æsop represents the fly as sitting on the axle of the chariot and saying, "What a dust do I raise!" We men, in like manner, are given to exaggerating the consequences of our actions and the meaning of our lives. We must contemplate things from our own point of view, for there is no other place from which to take observations. The all-important thing, naturally, for each of us is his own little life, given to him once for all between two eternities, but it is well to remind ourselves often that the world does not usually take us at our own rating, and will not greatly miss us when we disappear from the scene. It required a long, hard struggle for science to convince men that the earth was not the centre around which the heavenly bodies revolved, and in our thinking the Ptolemaic system, which loves to

fancy that we are the very heart of things, is much more difficult to overthrow.

Since this is a natural tendency, there is much plausibility in that objection to prayer as a real power to achieve results, which is based upon the insignificance of man and the overwhelming greatness of the universe in which he lives. Is not the very idea, it is asked, that God who created and controls those stupendous, immeasurable systems, should make changes at the request of the short-lived inhabitants of this small planet, a piece of colossal egotism? The argument is as old as the Book of Job.

> *"Look unto the heavens and see;*
> *And behold the skies which are higher than thou.*
> *If thou hast sinned what effectest thou against him?*
> *And if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him?*
> *If thou be righteous, what givest thou unto him?*
> *Or what receiveth he of thy hand?"*
>
> —Job 35:5-7.

A form which this objection often takes is that even here on earth there are millions of people with diverse interests, each needing divine help in his particular situation, and often their desires conflict so that what the one asks the other dreads, and all together form such a weltering chaos of suffering and want, incoherent, inconsistent, that to answer all petitions seems to us out of the question.

Here is a real embarrassment to the religious mind which is perhaps most deeply felt when civilized nations engage in armed conflicts. The fact that war seems to pit Christians against one another in a contest of petition to the common Father of them all is one indication, among many, of how unchristian is the state

of society and the state of mind which it produces. No campaigns have been more relentless, no sacks of cities more savage, than those which have been carried on in the name of the Prince of Peace and in which sincere men on both sides thought they were doing God service; witness the extermination of the Albigenses, the horrors perpetrated by such men as Alva in the Netherlands, and the desolation of Germany by the Thirty Years War. The anomaly still persists in our more tolerant days. During the struggle to preserve the union in America, President Lincoln, the Commander-in-Chief of the northern armies, was a man of prayer, but so were Robert E. Lee, and Stonewall Jackson, leaders of the southern hosts. And in the period from 1914 to 1918 there was undoubtedly sincere intercession for the German invaders of Belgium and France, as sincere as that which on the other side was offered for the soldiers of England and our own country. How can God hear and answer all these?

First of all, it is to be noted that those who find this stumbling-block to effective petition insuperable, neglect one of the essential conditions of all supplications of which more must be said hereafter, namely, that it must be presented in submission to infinite wisdom and holy love. Access to the throne of grace does not mean the right to dictate to the righteous moral Governor. If it involved such consequences, we should need to pray to be delivered from our own prayers, lest the universe suffer shipwreck and universal chaos come upon us. A petition is an appeal to the Father, but not a peremptory demand upon Him. We may boldly say, "Judge me and plead my cause," but the very words imply that He is to be the judge and is to determine whose cause is right. As we look back into

the past we can see that at some of the great crises of history it would have been fatal to have fulfilled the desires of either foeman to the letter, and that at the end of the day divine leading brought about results for which both would have prayed had they been wise enough and good enough. The recognition of this fundamental principle gives us wondrous freedom. We can ask for anything we want, always pleading that eternal love will withhold the thing, if it be not best that we should have it. A part of our difficulty vanishes in the light of this truth.

For the rest, the objector is like him of whom the psalm says, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." The whole force of the argument is drawn from the feebleness of our imagination which cannot picture a being capable of attending to innumerable details and distinguishing the cry of each individual in what seems to us a vast chorus of discordant voices. If God were subject to such limitations as ourselves, the point would be well taken. Even a very gifted man who has great affairs to look after must not try to settle every smallest question that arises and pass judgment upon every minutest item, else the large interests will inevitably suffer. He will not be able to see the forest for the trees. A wise ruler will determine general policies, leaving the application of them in particular cases to subordinates, responsible to him, from whom an appeal can be made, if injustice is done.

A general who commands a whole army will court defeat, if he attempts to train each recruit and to direct the evolutions of each company and regiment, for he would have no leisure to study the plans of the campaign. There are scholars who have a knowledge

almost encyclopedic, of many subjects, without the power of coordinating that knowledge into a system, and they make extremely poor thinkers. But this inability of men to master at the same time grand designs and infinitesimal details has just one cause—human limitations. It is because we are finite, because our range of thought is very narrow, that we must focus our mental vision on single things or else be confused by a baffling multitude of impressions. Genius can sometimes transcend the bounds by which ordinary souls are limited, but not far. Napoleon was notable not only for his original and daring strategy, but for the microscopic exactness with which he directed each subordinate how to play his part. But Moscow and Leipzig and Waterloo proved that even his amazing powers of mind were not sufficiently comprehensive and penetrating.

But how inconclusive is it to reason from such analogies that the infinite hearer of prayer is hampered by similar disabilities! The all-mighty intelligence must be both telescopic and microscopic; it must know all that is knowable not only of things which stagger us by their immensity but also of things which elude our comprehension because of their minuteness. Prayers cannot be so numerous as to confuse Him, so that some are not heard. The conflicts of desires, the cross-purposes, cannot obscure His vision of what is best for each and for all. He who numbers the hairs of our heads and does not fail to note the fall of a sparrow, can secure not merely the greatest good to the greatest number, but the greatest good to each insignificant soul that does not refuse His grace.

But the same problem is more perplexing when we think of the enormous proportions of the universe in

which we live. An ancient singer who had watched the constellations in the clear nights of Palestine, thus expresses his reverent wonder:

> *"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,*
> *The moon and the stars which thou hast ordained;*
> *What is man, that thou art mindful of him?*
> *And the son of man that thou visitest him?*
> *For thou hast made him but little lower than God,*
> *And crownest him with glory and honour."*
>
> —PSALM 8:3-5, American R. V.

He stood in awe before the same difficulty as that which we face, but with him it was axiomatic that Jehovah is mindful of His creatures and visits them. He had no thought of adopting that solution of the enigma which is rather to give it up as insoluble—namely, to conclude that God, occupied with the big affairs of suns and systems, forgets the pigmies that pray to Him and never intervenes in their behalf.

The progress of knowledge since the days of the psalmist has immeasurably increased the impression of vastness which is produced upon every thoughtful observer of celestial phenomena. It was a blow to human self-esteem when the Copernican system overturned the old ideas as to the relative importance of the earth and the other planets. To the ancients our orb was the centre, and the sun, moon, and other bodies revolved about it in most complicated orbits. We now feel sure that the sun is the mighty giant that draws these as satellites after it, as it runs its course, and that the globe on which we live is one of the smaller of these satellites, being almost insignificant in size compared with some of its sisters. And of the latter it is regarded as probable that at least two are habitable, and may possibly be the dwelling-places of crea-

tures not unlike ourselves. This world on which we spend our short lives and with whose dust that which is mortal of us must at last mingle, is a small one as worlds go.

But this is not all. The whole heavens are studded with jewels which, because they keep virtually the same relative positions, are called " fixed stars." And they are confidently believed to be suns, perhaps each attended by its train of planets, and some of them are so gigantic that our own sun would seem like a dwarf beside them, and that Betelgeuse, in the constellation of Orion, might swallow it up, filling the whole space of which the earth's orbit is the circumference and jutting beyond, almost to Mars. Ordinary measures of distance are so inadequate for these remote provinces of creation that use must be made of a new standard, the light-year—the space which a ray of light, travelling at the speed of about one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles a second, would cover in twelve months. As we look at some of these bright luminaries, it is hard to realize that we see the body as it was perhaps a century ago and that, if it could suddenly be blotted out of existence, it would continue to be visible to us as long as we live. It is not an unreasonable conjecture that there are myriads of planets circling around these suns, which are fit abodes of intelligent beings, though this is, and must remain, a matter of conjecture only.

But astronomers do not stop at this point. One of the most familiar features of a cloudless night is that bright stellar path which we call the milky way. It is made up of crowded multitudes of stars. And an opinion, quite generally accepted, I suppose, is that the celestial system to which we belong has the form of a

huge cluster, circular, elliptical, or perhaps spiral in form, this milky way being the apparently close-packed area which we, situated towards the centre, see as we look in the direction of the circumference. Now, in various regions of the heavens there are nebulæ, some of which the telescope resolves into throngs of separate suns, inconceivably distant, the whole, perhaps visible to the naked eye as a dim point of light. These are thought to be star groups like our galactic system, vast universes, so remote that estimates in light-years of the space that separates them from us have little meaning for us. Will the Creator of all these give heed to the prayers that go up from our little earth?

> *"What is man, that thou art mindful of him?*
> *And the son of man that thou visitest him?"*

But this problem is at bottom the same exactly as the one already dealt with, and is difficult to us only because we cannot understand the working of an infinite mind. The motions and the order of these gigantic heavenly bodies are not more wonderful than the beautiful and exact mathematical designs on which snowflakes are formed or the texture and tints of the wings on some insignificant insect. We must not be deceived by the fallacy of mere bigness, as if that were the same as greatness. As a corrective to this tendency to be stampeded in our thought by vastness of distance or of bulk, it may be well to ponder the marvels of the atom, microscopically minute beyond the range of vision or of touch, which was until recently thought to be the ultimate indivisible constituent of matter, but has now been proved to be a little system like that of the sun and its planets, with positive nuclei around

which revolve negative electrons—varying in complexity from the simplicity of the hydrogen to the most extreme intricacy in the heavier elements (Cf. *The A B C of the Atom,* Bertrand Russell).

There is here the evidence of a mind that plans and a will that effects, just as there is in the star groups. There must be thought embodied in them both, for we can in a measure comprehend them. Only the intelligible speaks to intelligence, and the intelligible must originate with intelligence, whether it be in distant constellations or in infinitesimal molecules. Eternal wisdom and goodness must care as much for things immeasurably small as for things immeasurably great. It is doubtful whether our categories of big and little apply at all either in the matter of space or time, to Him with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. He marks the fall of a world or the fall of a sparrow. He fails not to hear the chorus of the morning stars, but He listens, too, whenever a repentant sinner cries to Him.

For, after all, God surely does not measure worth by bulk. I think it is not presumption to say that a human soul is of more value, not only than many sparrows, but also than many planets. These latter are made up of material constituents. Analysis of the spectrum shows in general the same chemical elements as are found on earth. Everywhere they bear the marks of intelligence, but these marks are impressed on them. They move in their fixed orbits, obeying intricate mathematical laws, but they follow them blindly without thought or will, yielding merely such response as a clod gives to the hand that lifts it. The moon is doubtless a frigid desert, the sun a monstrous, seething, fiery, chaos. These phenomena

give a superb exhibition of the power of God on the physical plane.

But there is a higher stage of being. It is to be like God and enter freely into His great purposes. It is one thing for dead matter to follow His fixed mechanical laws; it is immeasurably higher in some degree to understand His will and gladly to choose it. Greater than the Titanic worlds that move in accordance with the principle of gravitation was the mind of a Newton who could discover and elucidate it. There is glory to God as His thoughts are embodied in rolling spheres, there is a more excellent kind of glory when one of His creatures can think His thoughts after Him. It is this grander co-operation, this fellowship of love, we must believe, which He has always been seeking, and it was surely for this that He created all things. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, for it must be more pleasing to Him than the music of the spheres.

If this be the truth, then the objection to our supplications as a power that achieves results, may be set aside. If there are other worlds filled with beings that can love and serve Him, we ought to be thankful for it. The purpose to create such beings was perhaps the ultimate reason for producing this vast universe. Alfred Russel Wallace, indeed, thought that the probability was against this supposition, and that it might almost be said that the universe was made for man and centred in him. I am not convinced that he was right. But surely those in all parts of the stupendous creation who have such a share of His likeness that they have capacity for fellowship with Him will never be neglected or forgotten. Rather we may be certain that the infinite love will be especially manifested in the place where the supreme need is found.

VII

PRAYER AND THE WILL OF GOD

"Others apart sat on a hill retired,
In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end in wandering mazes lost."

—MILTON.

"Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, thou.
Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours to make them thine."

—TENNYSON.

THE free-will controversy is an old and complicated one into which this discussion is not bound to plunge, except in so far as the question whether prayer can have real answers is involved. Indeed, the time-honoured debate, when it awakens interest at all in these modern times, has shifted its ground and new and more redoubtable combatants have entered the lists. From the point of view of religion the most dangerous enemy is the out and out naturalist who denies the reality of human volition and insists that the whole inner life belongs in the realm in which fixed mechanical causation holds sway.

Some of the dialectical weapons which Jonathan Edwards wielded with such effect against his theological antagonists have been seized by the materialistic opponents of Christianity and may well be abandoned to them. If our irresistible conviction that within

limits we can choose our own course, is illusory, prayer as the offering of our desires to God is quite meaningless, but by the same token religion and even morality are impossible. The abstract question may be left to the metaphysician and the theologian. It is the assumption of these pages that the facts of consciousness are real facts, that there is a spiritual world as well as a physical, and that we are beings endowed with certain powers of initiative.

But the difficult problem is to say how such activity, especially how supplications which produce results otherwise unattainable, can find a place in a great scheme of things controlled in all its parts by a sovereign God. How can His will be changed by our requests? Would it be good in general, would it be even good for us, like Icarus, to attempt to drive the chariot of the sun? But if our intercessions have no effect at all upon the divine purpose, how can we say that they are a force in the universe, how can we believe that they effect anything?

If we try to isolate the conception of divine sovereignty, and approach this dilemma from that point of view, there is this to be said, that the objection to prayer on the ground that there is no room for it in the plan of God, comes from looking only at parts of that plan and refusing to consider it as a whole. Contemplate it as a complete, all-inclusive system, from which nothing is omitted, in which everything has its place and performs its function in relation to the grand design, then the contradiction disappears, at least in the precise form in which it has been presented. And surely the providence of God must be of this kind. If He is a being of intelligence His operations must be orderly and not chaotic, with great ends in view and

means adapted to secure them. If His is an infinite intelligence it can grasp all, and nothing either great or small will be left out of the vast scheme; the microscopically minute being as essential in its place as the immeasurably huge.

Such a system, too, must be thought of as a connected whole, each part so related to other parts and to the complete totality, that its omission or the failure of its contribution would mar the perfect plan. Causes must stand in proper connection with their effects, antecedents with their consequents. It is mischievous to set some one event off by itself and ask whether it was foreordained. It was certainly not fixed by fate as an isolated occurrence, independent of other occurrences, past, present and future. There are no special providences, or perhaps rather all providences are special. If it is determined that there shall be a harvest, it is also determined that the seed shall be sown. If a soul is predestined to eternal life, the faith, the repentance, the holy living, are predestined, by which that blessed consummation shall be secured.

Louis XI., in Scott's *Quentin Durward,* had resolved to take the life of his astrologer, but radically changed his purpose when the latter, who thoroughly knew his superstitious master, made him believe that just one day would intervene between the deaths of the two of them. The second member in this series of connected phenomena was so frightful to the king that he took every possible precaution to prevent the first.

From this point of view we can now see the relation of prayer to the sovereign will by which all things are ordered. There can be no talk of how our petitions can alter His plan, for they have a place in His plan. We cannot isolate them and seek to explain their con-

nection with the eternal purpose as if they were outside of it. If Elijah's request caused the rain to be withheld, both the prayer and the famine were predetermined in the same manner. If certain blessings come in answer to believing intercession, these blessings and this intercession are bound together in the purpose of the ages, just as are sowing and reaping, just as are faith and salvation. The sort of fatalism which says, "If one is to be saved, he will be saved anyhow, whatever he does or fails to do," seeks to divide the indivisible, and to put asunder that which God has joined.

But such an explanation runs afoul of another difficulty quite as insuperable. Is there anything left of human freedom? And is prayer possible, if men cannot of their own choice present their desires to the Father? If our approaches to the throne and all our actions are fixed in a great inflexible inter-related system of iron necessity, are we not mechanical automata, shut out from personal fellowship with God and from the attainment of moral character? "If communion with God," says a reverent thinker, "be not the free interchange of living trust for a living love; if it be not a voluntary appeal looking for a voluntary reply; if the imploring agony be a mere flash of vital force preordained to precede a fixed proportion of the divine blessing; if, in short, individual prayers do not individually affect the divine Spirit except as determinate signals in a mighty plan upon the appearance of which an act of love becomes due—then, I say, the true difficulty remains, that with such a conviction intensely stamped upon the mind, it would be totally impossible to pray. Prayer can never be the fulfilment of a 'prearranged condition,' the 'payment of a pepper-

corn rent,' without utterly ceasing to be prayer" (R. H. Hutton, *Theological Essays,* pp. 366-7).

But if we make human experience the basis upon which we proceed we shall have to affirm very strongly that we are free, that our actions, our words, our prayers, are our own. We know in our deepest being that it is so, and no arguments can very greatly affect that conviction. Sometimes when the sense of guilt is overwhelming, the suggestion would be welcome that one cannot help doing the deeds of sin which conscience condemns, but in the court of conscience such an excuse is given no standing. The most hardened criminal in his serious moments is usually ready to confess with Edmund:

"This is the excellent foppery of the world! that when we are sick in fortune (often the surfeit of our own behaviour,) we make guilty of our disasters, the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers, by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on: An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition, to the charge of a star! . . . Tut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing."—*King Lear,* Act I, Sc. II.

This freedom, we are all convinced, must be a fundamental element in any action, or else it cannot have any ethical or religious meaning. It is axiomatic that benevolence deserves no meed of praise, if it was enforced, that "the quality of mercy is not strained," that goodness cannot be the result of compulsion, that a manifestation of love must be given some other

name, if it is found to have been unintentional. Not only at the present do we feel that we have power in good measure to determine the course we shall take, but as we review the past we know full well that things turned out as they did largely because of our own choices. We should be ashamed to accept commendation for any of our achievements unless they were the products of a voluntary act. And when we have done wrong, when we have fallen into sin, the bitterest ingredient in the cup of remorse or of repentance is our certain knowledge that the evil need not have been, that we could have followed the better course. It is for this reason that,

> *"Of all sad words of tongue or pen*
> *The saddest are these, it might have been."*
> —WHITTIER.

It is true that there are metes and bounds within which our freedom is confined and that when these are taken into account the sphere in which our self-determination operates is shown to be comparatively narrow. These limitations, according to Professor Palmer (G. H. Palmer, *The Problem of Freedom*, p. 151 ff.), are of four kinds, physical, psychological, voluntary, and rational. As to the first, we are placed on this planet, are clothed with bodies, and are capable of doing only what is possible to our own flesh and blood. In the psychological realm there are conditions of thought, some of them born with us and perhaps "reminiscences of ancestral conduct," or dependent upon "peculiarities of physical structure," some of them acquired in our own past, our habits, so that by the very constitution and training of our minds, a channel is formed in which our volitions flow.

There are boundaries also of a voluntary kind, for we are apt to make many decisions once for all and we do not think it necessary to recanvass the reasons for and against the course to be taken and to deliberate once more about what to do on each new occasion. It saves time and effort for great concerns, if the little choices that demand attention moment by moment are determined almost automatically.

He who in old days paused every time he passed a saloon to weigh the arguments against looking upon the wine when it is red as compared with the temporary pleasure that might be got from it, was not the model of what a free man ought to be. And again in the field of morals, we are confronted with the law of duty, and quite commonly, if not because of the nature of the case, then by reason of the circumstances, most paths are closed and but one remains open, if we would do the right. " Probably if we were altogether clear-sighted, we should see in each situation of life a single course to which duty summons and should understand that freedom is not equally distributed over the entire field " (*Op. Cit.*, p. 162). This law may be disobeyed, " but at a loss no less considerable than when we dash ourselves against nature's ordinances." Thus, free as we are, liberty holds possession of a very restricted margin of our lives.

But in this margin there is real power of origination, and prayer is as voluntary as anything else that we do. If the work by which we gain our daily bread is to be credited to ourselves, so is that fellowship in which we receive the bread of life. If the man who reaps the ripened grain is putting forth his own energy, so is the man who appeals to the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into His harvest. If intercession can

bring about results which without it would have failed, then by it we can influence the course of events. It is the "hand that moves the hand that moves the universe."

But how can a reconciliation be effected between these two doctrines, that of the liberty of man and that of the sovereignty of God? It is certain that their fields overlap, nay, that the area of freedom seems to be completely covered by that of divine control. They are foci of the same great ellipse.

An obvious answer to the difficulty (held by some to be the only one possible), is to affirm that the two views are inconsistent, and that man's self-determination, so far as it goes, is a limitation which infinite power has placed upon itself. "Acts of free beings," writes William Newton Clarke, "cannot be predestinated; and acts predestinated are not acts of free beings. The two ideas are mutually exclusive. Whatever room for predestination there may be in the universe, the acts of men are not included in it, if men are free" (*An Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 146).

A high authority in philosophy and psychology some years ago declared, "Though anarchy and government are incompatible notions, it is not certain that finite freedom cannot co-exist with divine sovereignty. To me, at least, it does seem certain that both imply real activity" (Professor James Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, p. 614). But in a later work the same author apparently arrives at a somewhat different conclusion: "The pluralist, then, it would seem, has no alternative but either to deny the complete prescience of the One or to abandon the self-determination of the many and thus wholly surrender his own position" (*The Realm of Ends*, p. 312).

Has God, then, in His great plan left room for a narrow margin of contingency within which free will can operate (it would be very narrow indeed), in spite of which reservation He can, by His omnipotent control of all forces, even those of our natures, work out His vast designs? This view concedes that there is a certain limitation to the divine infinitude to make room for voluntary action, but it is a limitation which by hypothesis God imposed on Himself because He chose for His own greater glory to make beings in His image, endowed with the gift and the responsibility of self-determination. It is not fair to charge that this is postulating a finite God. If it were impossible for Him to create intelligent creatures, this itself would be a limitation of His power.

Surely a moral ruler of immeasurable love must find a peculiar delight in those works of His hand which render to Him, not merely the blind obedience of machines, but the glad service and friendship of hearts in some small way like His own; and such devotion can be won only at the risk which is involved in allowing the denial of it. The advocates of this idea strongly protest against the inference that it makes providential government impossible. The late Professor William James, an avowed pluralist, illustrated the divine management by the analogy of an expert chess player whose opponent is a novice. The former does not know what moves the latter intends to make, but he knows all possible moves that he can make, and how to checkmate them, so as to win the victory. The expert, he thought, might stand for the infinite mind; the novice for us finite free agents (*The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, p. 181). "Free will," said Lord Tennyson, "was

undoubtedly the main miracle, apparently an act of self-limitation by the infinite, and yet a revelation by Himself and of Himself" (Quoted by Professor James Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, p. 316).

On the other hand, there are thinkers of high standing who refuse to pronounce that an all-inclusive divine sovereignty is irreconcilable with human liberty. Sir William Hamilton held that the conciliation of these apparent opposites was "one of the things to be believed, not understood" (Quoted by Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, p. 312). "Whether I open my mouth or lift my hand," says Dr. Hastings, "is before my doing it strictly within the jurisdiction and power of my personal will; but, however I may decide, my decision, so absolutely free to me, will have been already incorporated by the all-seeing, all-controlling being as an integral part, however insignificant, of His one all-embracing purpose, leading on to effects and causes beyond itself. Prayer, too, is only a foreseen action of man, which, together with its results, is embraced in the eternal predestination of God" (*The Great Christian Doctrines, Prayer*, p. 260). "Beyond all our finite limitations of time," writes another, "He has foreseen actions as well as prayers which to us are, at the moment, perfectly spontaneous; they are already included as factors and causes working out that final result which, beyond all dispute, is 'on a line with the good pleasure of His will'" (A. J. Worlledge, *Prayer*, p. 58).

Dr. Liddon is quoted by the same author to this effect: "To us this or that blessing may be strictly contingent on our praying for it; but our prayer is so far from necessarily introducing change into the purpose of the Unchangeable, that it has been all along

taken, so to speak, into account with Him" (*Op. Cit.*, p. 58). Even the Westminster Confession of Faith, which so strongly states that "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass," makes this very significant reservation, "yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established" (Chapter 3: 1).

Perhaps, then, one is not guilty of inexcusable superficiality, if one strongly affirm both the reality within limits of man's unforced volition and power of origination, and also a divine sovereignty which comprehends and controls all things to accomplish the purposes of holy love—without attempting to solve the baffling enigma of the relation of the two facts. No doubt this leaves a gap in one's thinking, but so be it. I cannot conceive how an all-wise and omnipotent God can govern the universe except by an inclusive and consistent plan in which every minutest item has its place and is so related to the whole and to all other parts that it is essential. I cannot understand how such a system can be complete if it fail to include the voluntary acts of intelligent beings, nor even how prayer can be answered unless He can make the wrath of man to praise Him and restrain the remainder of that wrath. But yet I am sure that we are free, with a liberty which is real, though narrowly bounded.

"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."

—HENLEY.

No reconciliation of these two aspects of things is attempted here, but it is permissible to hold the essential truth of both. The real difference between the determinist and the libertarian, after all, is not wide, though very fundamental, and even those who hold that the limited freedom postulated by the latter requires a contracted area of contingency, may still affirm that the control exercised by infinite wisdom and love comprehends the universe and covers all the smallest details.

In the light of this discussion we are entitled to draw at least two conclusions concerning prayer. The first is that no true doctrine of the decrees of God forbids us to think of it as the spontaneous offering up of our desires, as a free interchange, an intelligent fellowship between the finite and the infinite. We have insisted that liberty is a fact of human experience. If it is an illusion in the realm of religion, it is so everywhere else. The same enigma is presented when we try to explain any act of choice. The most rigid predestinarian knows, after all, that he does determine his own course in a thousand ways, yet in all these ways his preference is as rigorously fixed as in the matter of supplication, if it is fixed at all. If iron necessity rules us, it rules in the least things as well as the greatest. If we have no power of initiation when we make our appeals for divine help, neither have we when we lift food to our mouths, when we decide to take a walk, when we pick up a book, when we talk with friends, when we listen to music. All are the results of an absolute foreordination which stultifies our sense of self-mastery. We must not say that intercession is impossible on the basis of reasonings which, if carried to their legitimate conclusions, would paralyse every endeavour.

Rather, if in spite of the apparent paradox involved, we are ready to affirm that both divine sovereignty and human volition are realities, we must give each its due place in our thinking, and not devote to either such exclusive attention as to obscure the other. We dare not build our theology upon the former and follow the latter in practical life. In the sphere of religion we must make bold to draw our inferences as confidently from finite freedom as from the eternal purpose. When we approach the throne of grace, we shall remember with joy that there is nothing outside the sway of the Father in heaven, and that He can therefore give us whatever is best for us; but we shall also be glad that He makes us workers together with Himself, revealing something of His great purposes and desiring our intelligent co-operation.

The second conclusion upon which we have the right to insist is that no true doctrine of the decrees of God forbids us to think of prayer as efficient, as bringing events to pass. The fact that an all-wise Creator works on a comprehensive plan does not divorce causes from their effects.

As the farmer who would have a harvest must plow and sow, as the carpenter who would have a building must prepare the material and do the work, as the engineer who would operate a machine must have power and apply it properly, so he who would have blessings from God must make supplication for them. Our petitions have their place in the great system by which God governs, but they produce results as certainly as any other activities in that system. If, then, it be asked, Does prayer change the will of God? I should demur at the form of the question. But if the query be, Does prayer in part make the will of God

for us what it is? I should answer, Yes. The fact that the eternal who is superior to time, works in time according to a great purpose, does not make His proceedings mechanical, and the genuine expression of human adoration and aspiration and need is answered out of a heart of infinite compassion.

Of course, this does not mean that the partial views and folly of men shall determine the course of history rather than the purposes of the eternal Father, which are the expression of infinite wisdom in the service of infinite love. We are children, and often it would be disastrous for us to have our own way. If our vision were cleared of the mists of error and the clouds of sin and we could see all the facts in full blaze of day, His will for us is the thing which we should freely choose for ourselves. We are certainly not handed the reins of the horses that draw the chariot of the sun, with leave to drive recklessly whither we will and plunge the world into darkness. The very assurance that all things work together for good to them that love God is enough to guarantee that no such perilous license is granted to us.

Perhaps the effect of prayer, then, is not to change the will of God, but to bring us into line with the will of God so that its high ends may be reached. His purpose is a purpose of love. It is holy and just and good. It provides for us better things than we could ask. It gives either that which we request or something better which we would request if we had more wisdom and insight. The value of petition is not that it wins over a distant and hostile world ruler, but that it brings us to the place where the love of the Father can really help us.

It may be objected that this is just to return to the

position which has been rejected, and to confess that our supplications are, after all, quite ineffective. They accomplish nothing. Their whole result is subjective, transforming our souls into the divine likeness and reconciling us to His plans, but producing no change in the course of events. All that is to come to us is determined by a higher providence, and all that our most earnest appeals accomplish is to bring us into submission to the inevitable.

But this is an inference which we emphatically reject. Suppose the eternal plan cannot be carried out unless we co-operate with the Father by our prayers, as well as by our other activities. It is a purpose of love, but that love may be thwarted if our hearts are closed against it. There were places where Jesus could do no mighty works because of their unbelief. Faith, had it been present, would not have changed the desire of the Master and created in Him an intention to bless; it would, however, have released His overflowing compassion and given it opportunity to work.

The repentant exclamation of the prodigal son, which the eagerness of the father would not allow him to finish, had very definite results—the welcome to the home, the best robe, the ring on the hand, and shoes on the feet, the feast and the rejoicing; but it did not accomplish this result by transforming hate into affection. Those good things had been waiting for the wanderer during his whole absence. He had now, however, come into a relation which made it possible for the love of the father to have its way. Prayers of this sort are not arbitrary conditions of grace, but are organically connected with the consequences that follow them. They are causes which are essential to the effect. "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: For this, moreover,

will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them" (Ezekiel 36:37).

When we recall, then, that our supplications are addressed to a Father who knows our needs before we ask Him and by whom all possible results for us are perfectly understood, we are probably right in thinking that our requests ordinarily produce their effects thus by bringing us into line with the will of God so that a channel may be opened in which His goodness may flow. It may be that all our petitions are effective on this principle. But will it explain the consequences of intercession for others? Does it make clear how saints ripe for glory are often surprised at the answers to their petitions?

The promises of the Scripture are marvellously rich. And sometimes, as in the parable of the unjust judge and the importunate widow, the lesson seems to be taught that God pours out His gifts just because His children cry to Him, as if He takes pleasure in the profusion of His own bounty, as if His generosity were ready to bestow more than is needed. At any rate, the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working, even in a universe in which an infinite God worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will.

VIII

PRAYER AND THE WORLD'S ORDER

"And he, shall he."

"Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

"Who trusted God was love indeed,
And love Creation's final law—
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—

"Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

"No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him."

—TENNYSON.

THE conception of prayer as petition, in answer to which real results are effected, brings us to another problem which to the modern mind is still more baffling than the one that has been discussed. The free-will controversy so fiercely fought out in other generations, has come to seem rather remote and academic in a practical and scientific age. The living question to the man of today is, Do our supplications make any difference? Can they be answered with actual results, in a world that is governed by law,

effects invariably following causes, and all knit together in a great ordered system which comprehends all matter and all force and leaves no room for the fortuitous or the free?

If appeals to the Father in heaven are efficient, it must be through workings which are supernatural, and to many this seems like a confession that the hypothesis is indefensible. Popular opinion and a great deal of scholarly opinion is ready to say Amen to the dictum of Matthew Arnold, that miracles do not happen.

The basis of such objections to the teaching that we can ask of God and really receive, is the doctrine, generally accepted, of the conservation of energy. Natural forces may be transformed, but man cannot destroy them. One form can be changed to another and the equivalence can often be proved by exact measurements. And it is assumed that the total energy of the universe is a constant quantity, to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken, though constant metamorphoses are occurring, it being now potential as in coal, now appearing as motion or heat or light. In the very combustion of fuel nothing is annihilated, but the various elements still persist in the warmth and the illumination and the vapour and the ashes.

It is true that this principle is at bottom only a working hypothesis, which has not been, and indeed cannot be, absolutely demonstrated, for no universal induction is possible. But it so well fits the phenomena of nature as observed, that by a kind of venture of faith it has come to be regarded as almost axiomatic. Thus the universe is viewed as a great system in which there is evolution and retrogression,

but whose resources are incapable of increase or diminution.

Now, there are many who believe that this principle shuts out prayer as a power that can do anything real in the world of phenomena. It is not merely that nature is careless of our needs and sufferings, cruel, "red in tooth and claw with ravin," as many thinkers, from the time of the ancient Greeks to that of John Stuart Mill, have complained. The argument is rather that it is inflexible, a domain of hard, invariable, undeviating law, in which the aspirations and agonies of men do not count, or rather are a part of the mechanism with no more significance than the movements of the tides. Effects follow causes with absolute exactness. The total situation in any one moment produces that of the next moment. The annihilation of a pebble would mar the balance of worlds. And any interference with these fixed sequences or guidance of them is ruled out as inadmissible because it would be a miracle, the introduction of a *Deus ex machina,* which is an abomination in the eyes of materialistic science.

In dealing with this objection it is to be said that belief in God does not demand a denial of the law of the conservation of energy; this faith, however, does insist that the physical system is not so close-knit but that personality can act upon phenomena and make use of natural forces. Those who reject this position, defy the universal conviction of experience and common sense, for we are all sure that in daily life we do work our will in dealing with things—even we men; and why should we think this impossible with God? Limited as we are, we have capacity to understand the invariable laws of phenomena and we employ this knowledge to conquer the earth.

Men long ago learned enough of the essentials of hydrostatics to float their boats on rivers or oceans, they learned enough of ærostatics to make the winds propel them, and thus they subdued the elements. It is an invariable rule that water at a certain temperature passes into steam and that steam confined exerts enormous pressure, and by applications of that rule railroad trains are caused to speed across continents, ocean liners circle the globe in defiance of currents and storms, and the intricate machinery of our mills and factories is furnished with power. Experiments have shown something of how electricity works, even without telling much of the secret of what it is, and it is compelled to light our houses, to run our street cars, to carry our messages, and the very sound of our voices, across space.

It is true that in all these activities we submit to the ordinances of nature in order to rule her, the fixed lines of sequence by which effects follow causes are not broken, indeed the success of human inventions depends upon the fact that they cannot be broken. But whether the quantity of energy is thus increased or not, this energy is certainly guided to ends which it would not of itself have reached, and thus to direct it is to introduce a new causal agency among those that are constantly operating.

That one of the commonest of all experiences is to see or to take part in this guidance by intelligence in the world of phenomena, seems so incontrovertible that no one could be expected to dispute it. Nevertheless, a battle of the giants has been waged over this issue and those who hold that human activity comes under the law of the conservation of energy, as truly as production of heat and light from fuel, are by no means

silenced, though I think they are not as confident as they once were. The first proponents of this law indeed did not affirm that it was applicable to the things of the mind, but this extension of its domain was soon made with great confidence.

The whole evolution of the race, its history, its science, its art, its religion, are only the action of matter and energy, operating under mechanical law, tending to change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous and from the heterogeneous back to the homogeneous. Even what we call human freedom comes under the same rule. When a stimulus affects some part of the body an impulse is carried by an afferent nerve to the brain, certain alterations take place in the cells there, then an impulse is carried from the brain by an efferent nerve producing appropriate action, and the circle is complete, the balance maintained. Men conduct themselves according to the influence of antecedents which make every deed and thought certain, all being included in the mechanical round which is under the law of the conservation of energy. There is no room for worship, no room for religion, according to such a theory. And the idea of real answers to prayer is fantastic, as it would involve the introduction of new elements into this closed system.

Are, then, our thoughts, emotions, aspirations, part of this closed system, or are they outside of it? Here is a dilemma which the late John Fiske says he presented to Herbert Spencer, and the latter admitted the difficulty of it. When the mechanical stimulus on the surface of the body is carried to the brain, does the reflex action sent back along the efferent nerves carry the whole quantity of the energy re-

ceived? Then whence comes the continual flow of consciousness, whence come meditation and love and the sense of duty? If they do not obey this law, an immense deduction must be made from its universality, with most significant consequences. But if they do form a link in this chain of mechanical causation, what becomes of the modicum of force which was expended upon them? A thought may be great, but simply as a thought it counts for absolutely nothing in the world of phenomena. You cannot weigh it or measure it. You cannot estimate its intensity by a thermometer. You cannot say that it has a current of so many volts or amperes.

Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony,* a gigantic expression of imagination and feeling, did not give back a single foot-pound of power to the physical world. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* must have cost the poet deep contemplation, but with all his genius he could by no possibility have transformed these musings into actual motion which could in turn have passed into heat or light. John Milton, dictating *Paradise Lost,* morning by morning, to his friends merely set up some sound vibrations in the air, and these, it would seem, constituted the total homage to this all-comprehensive law, offered by an effort which is regarded as one of the greatest achievements of the human mind. The energy which creates thought must surely be dissipated.

The other horn of the dilemma is usually chosen, and the world of ideas is placed outside the closed physical world. The defenders of materialism insist that it not only is outside, but that it cannot break in, and that the great causal system is absolutely unaffected by it. The discussions of the problem have been voluminous and intricate, and there will be no

attempt here to answer the Behaviourist who thinks he does not think, nor others who in like manner doubt the very possibility of doubt. The explanations of those who shut our real selves out of the world in which we live, for the most part take the form of the doctrine of parallelism in some of its varieties. (The different hypotheses are admirably discussed by Dr. McDougall in *Body and Mind,* and by Professor Pratt in *Matter and Spirit.*)

The common feature of the diverse presentations of parallelism is that the physical and the spiritual run on lines which are in the same plane but never meet, there is perfect harmony between them—at large and in detail—but they are separated by an impassable gulf and there are no paths by which the one can go over to the other. The view, however, takes on various colours depending upon the question whether the two are on an absolute and independent equality, or whether one is superior to the other and therefore the more fundamental reality. An advantage which, it is supposed, this hypothesis offers, is that the law of the conservation of energy is maintained intact, and the phenomenal world remains a realm that is self-sufficient.

A favourite supposition with those whose thinking is essentially naturalistic is that thoughts and feelings are epiphenomena of the brain-process, that " each detail of the stream of consciousness " is " dependent upon some specific feature or detail of the total brain-process with which it coincides, or to which it immediately succeeds, in time " (McDougall, *Op. Cit.,* p. 127). There is hesitation in affirming a causal dependence of the former upon the latter, and yet that is implied. The mental activity is to the neural activity as the shadow to the moving parts of a machine, or the noise

it produces to the same machine. It is an accompaniment of the physical at certain highly specialized stages of its evolution. "The material universe is thus regarded as rolling on through the ages according to eternally fixed mechanical principles, and as producing now and again, on one or more of the stellar bodies on which brains happen to be evolved, little flecks of consciousness, which flash out like sparks of light, flicker for a moment and disappear, coming and going without affecting in the slightest degree the secular evolution and dissolution of material systems" (McDougall, *Op. Cit.*, p. 129).

But what a dismal and disheartening theory is this! All the great achievements of the human mind are the result of a happy accident by which intelligence was born out of matter. It is a meaningless thing, a by-product in a progress which has no goal and no morality. Our values must be given up as having no correspondence with the essential facts. And we face the inexplicable anomaly that the one fact which to us is directly certain, our own consciousness, is a sort of shadow of reality, unable to break into the closed system of true existence, that the object of our immediate knowledge is an illusion, and that only the information which comes to us mediately through the senses brings us into any manner of contact with the "thing in itself."

It may be said, indeed, that such criticisms are not pertinent, because even if mind came into being, in the way that this opinion predicates, our feeling of the incomparable importance of the things of the mind and the directness of our intuition of self, would of necessity be just what they are, that intelligence "would claim a primacy over matter, the primacy of

the knower over the known, and in the pride of self-consciousness would despise its parent, matter, and would incline to assert its independence of it" (McDougall, *Op. Cit.*, p. 149). But this is only to say that the hypothesis is consistent. This claim may readily be granted.

If this is a mad world, the topsy-turvy of the conclusion that the knower is illusory while the thing he knows is solid reality, need not greatly trouble us, for all is chaos. But our assurance that there is truth anywhere and that our reason may be trusted, is based at bottom on the assumption that the universe is sane, or rather that the Maker and upholder of the universe is wise and good. And the hypothesis whose logic leads to the conclusion that our very thinking is deceptive, would seem to be self-condemned. Intelligence, if it were real intelligence, would no doubt act in accordance with its own nature, even if it sprang fortuitously out of certain combinations of matter. The admission merely serves to demonstrate how impossible such an origin appears to the intelligence itself.

It is a more plausible hypothesis that the parallelism between the physical and the psychical is universal. Why should this curious epiphenomenon break forth only at times? Why should complex organic processes of cells made up of atoms and molecules have this extraordinary accompaniment, without any loss of energy or any violation of the law of its conservation, unless all atoms and molecules in their degree possess this shadow or echo in the spiritual realm? To some convinced believers in the reality of things unseen this has seemed to be the way out of the difficulty, leaving the sacrosanct sphere in which material forces operate hermetically sealed, and yet giving freedom to mind in

its own territory. "All is mechanism," and yet thought and will are not illusory.

But to this view again the objections are insuperable. The old theory of a pre-established harmony between the two forms of existence does not appeal to thinkers of today. It is too artificial, too fatalistic. But how, then, can the connection be accounted for? If it be held that body and spirit are twin aspects of reality, further explanation must be demanded and stumbling-blocks multiply in the path, whether they are considered aspects of one another or aspects of a *tertium quid* (See Pratt, *Matter and Spirit*, p. 52 ff.). Moreover, according to this hypothesis each cell of the body and of the brain must have its mental accompaniment, and thus the soul would be a great whole made up of innumerable parts. But the unity of consciousness rules such a suggestion quite out of court (Pratt, *Op. Cit.*, p. 78 ff., quoting James, Cf., James, *Psychology—Briefer Course*, p. 198 ff.). The problems raised by this explanation so far outweigh any advantages which it may be supposed to possess, that the religious thinker may confidently count on support from the best psychology in rejecting it.

There is nothing left to us, then, but to accept as true what common sense teaches and what virtually no man, in dealing with practical life, doubts, that the mind is influenced by the world of phenomena and influences that world in turn. This idea of interaction between the physical and the psychical can hardly be called an hypothesis. It is a fact of every day's experience. It is only when we are sophisticated by speculation that any other theory seems to us possible. No man really believes, except as a philosophical system demands it, that our vast cities, our stately

cathedrals and churches, our mills and factories with their complicated machinery, our railroad trains and steamships and airplanes, are not the products of intelligence and will-producing results through the control of matter and force. Personality is superior to things and can in good measure inaugurate changes among them.

If this be disloyalty to the law of the conservation of energy, make the most of it. That law is at best a working hypothesis, which has not been and cannot be proved either by deduction or induction, and has not been regarded by many of its most eminent defenders as applicable to the acts of free agents. If it should be supposed, as Professor Ward suggests, that some waste in the store of energy in the universe is not improbable, it may well be that the contributions to that store by voluntary action approximately maintain the balance. Such a principle, at any rate, received by faith, not by sight, must not be allowed to set aside the plain testimony of universal experience.

The application of this conclusion to the matter of prayer is obvious. The natural order offers no obstacle to free and unforced supplication on our part. And that it does not make divine answers to prayer impossible is rendered certain by the fact that it does not make our own activity on the physical plane impossible. We can in a measure control matter and force. Shall we suppose that He in whom we live and move and have our being is a prisoner in the closed system which cannot shut us in? He is immanent in His universe, but He reigns over it and works all things according to the counsel of His own will. But the implications of this truth require some further discussion.

IX

PRAYER AND MIRACLE

"These are Thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair; Thyself how wondrous then,
Unspeakable! who sitt'st above these heavens,
To us invisible, or dimly seen,
In these Thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine."

—MILTON.

"Enthroned above the world although He sit,
Still is the world in Him and He in it;
The self-same power in yonder sunset glows
That kindled in the words of Holy Writ.

"Though one with all that sense or soul can see,
Not imprisoned in His own creations, He,
His life is more than stars or winds or angels—
The sun doth not contain Him, nor the sea."

—RICHARD HOVEY.

IT is fundamental to thought and even to morality to maintain that this is an ordered universe. It would not be intelligible, unless it followed regular courses which we can trace at least in part and for which in part we can see the reasons. Ethical conduct would not be possible, if there were no standards of virtue whose permanence could be counted on; and at least certain strong motives for such conduct would be gone, if the results of any choice could never be forecast with approximate certainty. If the forces that environ us were so variable that we could never tell how they would act, if fire might burn at one time and

not at another, if what was nourishing food one day might be poison the next, if the law of gravitation might operate for a while and then fail, if water might sometimes boil at 212 degrees Fahrenheit and might sometimes freeze at the same temperature, if the sun might this morning rise in the east and tomorrow in the west, if we could not be sure whether the ocean would bear up a ship or not, if the rules according to which steam and electricity work might at any moment change, if the clouds might occasionally pour down deadly chemicals instead of refreshing rains—if we lived in such a world, all invention, all progress, all civilization, all social intercourse would be annihilated. The universe would be a bedlam, a chaos.

But because nature is methodical, because second causes in general effect their results with invariable regularity, therefore we can know what to expect, and can live in safety among the mighty energies that encompass us. We can do more. Learning how these energies behave, we can by obedience to their laws make them serve us.

It is hard to believe that this ordered universe is without a mind. Its intelligibility to us is the sign that it is the expression of intelligence. It is probable that we rise to the conception of general causation from the consciousness that our own wills are causes, and it is reasonable to think that second causes themselves are essentially operations of the divine will, working on the lower physical plane. They are, as it were, his habits, following fixed and definite lines, without deviation, at least in ordinary circumstances. And one reason for this uniformity has already been indicated—it makes the world a fit school for the training of intelligent beings.

"I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's law."—BROWNING.

A little reflection on this truth of the necessity of a reign of law which shall be in general invariable, ought to soften the harsh expressions in condemnation of the cruelty of nature, especially on the part of those who find no room for miracle in its domain. When Lisbon was destroyed by an earthquake, in the year 1755, the poet Gœthe, then a boy, said there is no God. The statesman, Thomas B. Reed, is said to have been driven to similar doubts by the Mt. Pelee disaster. The recent seismic disturbances in Japan provoked the old questionings once more.

Perhaps no one ever presented the problem more ably and more poignantly than the great logician John Stuart Mill (Nature, in *Three Essays on Religion*). But it is hardly fair to expect the benefits of an educative system and then complain, if we incur its penalties. The burnt child fears the fire, but this discipline would fail, if heat did not scorch the innocent or the helpless. It could not rightly be asked of a moral ruler whose methods must be uniform in order to teach their lesson, that He should suddenly suspend the law of mechanics and hydrostatics to save the lives of the passengers on the *Titanic*. It might indeed be said that it was not God that destroyed those poor people in Japan, though the energies that produce tremours in the earth's crust are manifestations of His power. The cataclysm was the effect of natural causes which science may some day so well understand that it can foretell such a catastrophe as it does an eclipse. To intervene when the operations of His ordered system seem cruel would be to work a miracle, and mir-

acles, all will agree, are of rare occurrence and granted only for great ends.

There are many, of course, who doubt if they ever occur—a position from which, if it can be successfully defended, destructive assaults may be made upon the faith that prayer brings responses from the heart of the Eternal. If the human will is a real cause in the phenomenal world—and we have found reasons to believe that it is—may we not argue from analogy that the divine volition reserves to itself as great a liberty? Can the possibility of variations from the ordinary methods of procedure be justly denied, unless it be by an atheist who says there is no God, a deist who puts Him outside of His universe, or a pantheist who makes Him and His universe one and the same?

There are those who insist that there is no place for miracle in an ordered system, that the admission of such discordant elements would make the cosmos a chaos. There can be no doubt that the greatest conceivable blessings would be too costly, if to win them the world must cease to be a realm of law. Indeed, the supernatural itself would be of no value in such a realm, because it would have no meaning. Signs and wonders which occurred every day would not be signs and wonders. The unusual attracts attention only by contrast with the usual. The evidential worth of extraordinary events in the history of revelation has grown out of the fact of their infrequency. They have been almost limited to a few times of extreme crisis. The strongest advocate of the view that God is not imprisoned in the system which He maintains, but can act freely in it and upon it must hold that miracles, in so far as they are deviations from the fixed order of phenomena, are the exception that proves the rule.

Objection is made to the thought of supernatural intervention even on ethical grounds. It is argued that heaven plays no favourites, that a government which swerved from the straight line of natural causation in bringing events to pass, would be capricious and therefore immoral, and that in order that men may learn to control phenomena and to control themselves, there must be no variableness nor shadow of turning in the action of the forces by which they are environed. But, fundamentally, this reasoning is an argument against freedom in the Creator, at least when He works on the physical plane. Freedom is not caprice. And action which even suspends or modifies the ordinary tendencies of matter and force is not, for all that, necessarily lawless; it may be prompted by the higher law of love. The course pursued by the best of mothers is free and cannot therefore be forecast with certainty by her children. It must therefore, if this account of such relations is just, be whimsical and irrational. The answer of any loyal child would be that though he could not tell exactly what his mother would do he did know her heart and could always count on her doing the thing that its tenderness prompted.

That is government on principle, though not on fixed mechanical rules. And the believer in miracles holds that the Father in heaven has a wisdom and affection beyond that of the most perfect human parents as the sun surpasses a tallow candle, and that His interventions in the domain of second causes have always been in the interest of redeeming love. It is surely to be hoped that this faith is not mistaken. We need a knowledge of the methods of nature that we may be able to live in our environment and to develop wisdom and character; but above all we need a God who cares

for us and to whose arms we can retreat from the harshness of inexorable circumstances.

The credibility of any particular miracle is a matter of evidence, and each case must stand upon its merits. With the general question of the possibility of the supernatural we must attempt to grapple more directly. The point at issue can hardly be better stated than in the words of John Stuart Mill, " The test of a miracle is: Were there present in the case such external conditions, such second causes we may call them, that whenever these conditions or causes reappear the event will be reproduced? If there were, it was not a miracle; if there were not, it was a miracle, but it is not according to law: it is an event produced without, or in spite of law " (*Three Essays on Religion,* p. 225). I should be inclined to challenge the closing statement unless it be understood that by *law* is meant physical or phenomenal law. With this qualification, we have in the words cited an admirable presentation of the very crux of the problem. The definition of a contemporary theologian is to the same effect: " A miracle, we hold, is not brought about by any or all of the immanent causes operating within the mundane system, but is due to the operation of some transcendent cause " (Principal Galloway, *Religion and Modern Thought,* p. 307).

A distinction is sometimes made between a miracle and the general supernatural, the former being thought of as perhaps a more direct intervention in the natural order than the latter, or as more definitely connected with revelation, accompanying a religious teacher, constituting a seal of His message, and, in the opinion of some, ceasing after the apostolic age. In any case, the area covered by the second would overlap that of the

first. This discrimination, whether just or not, is not a vital one in this discussion. There cannot be objective answers to prayer in the material world without supernatural interpositions and in that sense the age of miracles is not passed; but it would be presumption to expect as the result of our petitions such signs and wonders as the Master wrought in the days of His flesh.

The crucial question, then, is this: Is the physical universe so close-knit an order that there is no room for free action in it or upon it by that God who is both immanent and transcendent? "The hypothesis is, that nature forms a closed system of interacting causes and effects, and every event which occurs in nature must in the end be traced to the workings of this system" (Galloway, *Op. Cit.*, p. 304). We are, in fact, dealing once more with the theory of the conservation of energy in its extreme form. It hardly needs repeating that it is only a working hypothesis, which does good service in scientific investigations of matter and force, which seems to fit the facts admirably in many fields, but which, because a universal induction is impossible, never has been proved, being in its unlimited application only an aspiration and a hope of its advocates. The realm of phenomena is certainly orderly, else it were not intelligible, but that it is completely self-contained, adjusted part to part with absolute precision, and hermetically sealed against intrusion, is merely an academic speculation against which may be urged weighty considerations which seem unanswerable.

One obvious barrier to its acceptance has been already emphasized. The voluntary action of men does direct and govern second causes and so breaks into this closed system. To deny this because it vio-

lates the law of the conservation of energy is to defy the positive testimony of consciousness for the sake of a dogma which cannot be demonstrated. And probably no one is ready to affirm that we have a power of initiative, of which the Creator Himself cannot or will not make use.

On this hypothesis, if prayer and fellowship with God are at all allowed to be possible, our lives are divided into two parts, the spiritual, in which we can know His grace and enjoy His friendship, and the material, into which He cannot enter at all except as the unvarying mechanical operation of second causes is due to His volition. But this physical world is the one in which our work must be done, our battles fought; in fact, we know nothing by experience of how a soul could perform its functions separate from the body, though faith assures us that the death of the body need not end the activity of the soul. But here and now the personality must cherish its values and achieve its ideals in an environment of second causes and through an organism of flesh and blood.

If the Father cannot help us in the arena where our struggles take place, it is surely doubtful whether much would be left which could be affected by the deeper communion of the invisible world. " Elements of the natural and spiritual fuse and blend in the personal life of men. A rigid separation of the two spheres becomes impracticable in face of the patent facts of experience. If this be so, it will require very cogent reasons to convince us that God can exercise an initiative in the kingdom of souls which He cannot exercise in the realm of nature " (Galloway, *Op. Cit.*, p. 312).

Furthermore, as Principal Galloway has pointed out (*Op. Cit.*, p. 322 ff.), in nature itself, especially in the

organic stage, there are traces of what looks like the bursting forth of creative energy, new beginnings for which no sufficient cause can be found in their immediate antecedents. The variations and mutations by which often great leaps of progress are made, may be explained by the doctrinaire materialist as merely the manifestation of potencies which were resident from the start in the germ, but such an account of these notable advances is not convincing. Especially is it hopelessly inadequate as an answer to the puzzle how the organic arose out of the inorganic, animal life out of vegetable life, or *vice versa,* and self-conscious personality out of animal life.

" These new beginnings are prepared for, no doubt, but the fresh forward step is not accounted for by the preparation. Such fresh movements are sometimes described as creative synthesis. In a humble way this takes place when the seed out of its intrinsic resources brings forth variations which diverge from the strict type. The same creative synthesis appears when a new individual organism is formed from the fusion of the sperm and the ovum, or when the dim life of feeling and instinct break into perception, or when perception in turn blossoms into the larger activity of rational intelligence. To find the sufficient reason for these wonderful developments in prior elements interacting with the environment seems impossible; and if this be so, it shows that within the system of nature agencies are at work not reducible to quantitative causes; in other words, the supernatural is immanent in the natural order " (*Op. Cit.,* p. 323).

These are evidences of a higher will working through second causes, which themselves are, we hold, only the habitual methods of divine operation on the phys-

ical plane. But thinking of these second causes for the sake of clearness as objective to Him, it may be argued that there are ways in which the Creator can manipulate these phenomenal forces, as if from without, not violating but using the order of nature, even as we men can in our smaller way do. Is the universe one in which there is perfect co-ordination of the action of all elements, or is there room for what, so far as ordinary processes of matter and energy can account for it, we must call chance? Professor Palmer answers the latter question in the affirmative (See the fine discussion in *The Problem of Freedom,* p. 128 ff.).

A given cause produces an effect which in turn becomes the cause of another effect, and such a train of antecedents and consequents may be denominated as a *line of sequence.* A stone thrown at a mark constitutes one line of sequence, a bird flying through the air, another; but if the two lines of sequence meet, the bird is killed (*Op. Cit.,* p. 135). "For each of the two the causation is complete and evident; it is sequential causation, fixed, invariable, each line secured by its past and capable of only a single issue in the future. We do not inquire, therefore, what induced these lines of sequence. But there is something more. What induced their intersection? Can any sequential cause explain that?"

The reply is in effect that there are but two possibilities, coincidence or external control. "When I inquire what brought about the collision, one answer will be that nothing at all did, it was an affair of chance; the two sequential series, each absolutely blind, butted into each other at this special point and were in no wise prepared for the collision. The only other conceivable answer is that an ante-sequential cause inter-

vened from outside either series." "Either, then, there was no cause for the collision and merely one for each set of two headlong motions, or else a co-ordinating cause came from some other source than they and was itself of a different type." I do not see how this position can be successfully assaulted. It is true that a mind which could comprehend and measure all physical forces might, where free action did not enter into the equation, be able to tell from its knowledge of the direction and energy of each line of sequence, exactly when, where and how they would meet. But it would still remain true that each series pursues its own blind way regardless of the other, and that there was no provision for a catastrophic meeting in the second causes.

Here, then, according to this thinker (*Op. Cit.*, p. 138), is the "field of freedom." It is the arena in which man's battles with nature are fought and his conquests achieved. We do not so much interfere with the working of second causes, as give guidance to them. Lines of sequences are the means which the inventor and the scientist employ to carry out their designs. In the sphere of mechanics the power actually contributed by human agents toward turning the wheels of industry is so small in quantity as to be negligible.

But the complex machinery of industry enables the engineer to give direction to lines of sequence, and to determine the place and time and method of their combinations. The law of causation is not annulled; it is established. Of course the phenomenal order, as it was before this intrusion of mind, will not explain the new situation. A new element has entered. If free-will makes the natural forces to deviate in the slightest degree from the course which they would follow with-

out it, it has entered as a concause into the manifold of causes which effect the result. And this, it must be rigidly maintained, is the only reasonable account of the place of our activity in the world of phenomenon.

Now, it is unthinkable that the infinite Creator has less liberty in the universe which He keeps in being than have His creatures. Were second causes the independent, fixed, unchangeable things which some think them, unalterable even by Him, He could still control their inter-relations, He could direct their lines of sequence to accomplish His great purposes. Faith rejoices in the thought that what we call chance is really divine providence. Many at least of the miracles of revelation may be explained on the basis of the use rather than the supersession of natural law. Perhaps, if we knew more, we should be able to understand that in all the signs and wonders, even in that supreme display of power when our Lord was raised from the dead, the phenomenal order was not violated, but rather entered by new energies from above, which co-operated with the lower physical forces to achieve the glorious victory.

This explanation is not an attempt to deny the supernatural, but rather strongly to affirm it. God is in His universe and He is above it. He can work through the natural order and He can work upon it. Second causes themselves are the expression of His infinite will, and He can manipulate them for gracious ends. The fixed system of phenomena is a blessed arrangement which makes progress and morality possible, but it is not a closed and sealed system which shuts Him out and prevents preferential treatment for the highest ends. In Him we live and move and have our being. The supernatural is all around us.

PART III

USES OF PRAYER

X

PRAYER AND SIN

"One cried, God bless us! and, Amen, the other,
As they had seen me, with these hangman's hands
Listening their fear, I could not say, Amen,
When they did say, God bless us. . . .
But wherefore could not I pronounce amen?
I had most need of blessing, and amen
Stuck in my throat."

—SHAKESPEARE.

"Jesu, crown'd with thorns for me,
Scourged for my transgression,
Witnessing through agony
That Thy good confession;
Jesu, clad in purple raiment,
For my evil making payment,
Let not all Thy woe and pain,
Let not Calvary be in vain."

—THEOKTISTUS, translated by J. M. NEALE.

WE have been dealing with problems which concern the possibility of prayer. We have now to take up others which have no solution except in prayer and in those spiritual forces which it invokes. Of these the one in which all the rest are somehow involved, with which all religions struggle, which is in fact the universal burden of humanity, is to learn the meaning and the cure of sin.

A fundamental, inevitable fact of life is that men are sinners. There was no need for special revelation to make known this fact, though in revelation its meaning is clarified and its danger emphasized; indeed, the chief distinction of Christian teaching on the subject is

simply its frankness and its thoroughness. This ugly deformity of our natures assumes the forms both of defect and overplus. It may be lack of conformity to, or it may be transgression of, the law of God—which law is written, at least dimly, on our own consciences. We must daily confess that we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and have done those things which we ought not to have done. It is a phenomenon common to all members of the race—except the one perfect Man who was more than man—it is as ubiquitous as the habitations of the children of earth; and yet there is a feeling in us all that it ought not to be, that it is an intruder, an abnormality, which does not belong to the true essence of our being. And because of this sinister and hideous malformation in our souls, the prayers even of the greatest saints abound in confessions, in expressions of repentance, and in appeals for help against their own weakness.

The fact of sin is too evident to need proof, and with it comes all our woe. The most tragic feature of it is that our evil dispositions turn us away from God and seem to bar the way of approach to the mercy-seat. It is a hunger which makes us refuse food, a thirst which turns away from the living waters, a malady which is nauseated by the medicine that alone can cure it. Certain kinds of crime harden the heart and render supplications to the Father hard or impossible. Macbeth, returning from the murder of Duncan, cannot say Amen when he overhears the exclamation, God bless us. The king in *Hamlet,* guilty of his brother's death, confesses,

> *"Pray can I not,*
> *Though inclination be as sharp as will;*
> *My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent."*

There is forgiveness with God, but what shall be done with the transgressor whose wickedness scorns forgiveness?

For, from the subjective point of view, prayer is really *dominant desire* (Cf., *The Meaning of Prayer*, H. E. Fosdick). A request which is not the expression of such desire is hollow and meaningless; and that which we, in our heart of hearts, actually long for, is perhaps the burden of the petition which God hears. It is not meant, of course, that one cannot sincerely make supplication unless all that is low and base has been cleared away from the soul, for this would shut the door of grace to us all. But the wishes that are uppermost, the wishes that we would put into effect, if we could, the wishes whose frustration we would resist, if it were in our power, even though we may be ashamed to offer them as petitions to a holy God—these are our real prayers.

And so it comes to pass that the petitions which we put into words at the set time of devotion may not be the genuine appeals of our hearts at all. It is extremely easy to repeat forms of words consecrated by long usage, while the thoughts are wandering hither and thither. The covetous man who prays to be made generous while he is still resolved to grind the faces of the poor does not want his request to be granted. The angry man who asks for the spirit of love but at the same time fans the flames of his resentment against his neighbour, does not mean what he says. There may be evil objects for which our consciences would not permit us to offer petitions, but for which we would not hesitate to work. It may be that in such cases our lives speak so loud that heaven cannot hear what we say.

The great Augustine, with his marvellous skill in analysing the working of the soul, thus describes how he appealed in words for one thing when he wanted its opposite. "Because I had already lost so many years (twelve or thereabouts) since that nineteenth of mine age, when, upon the reading of Cicero's *Hortensius,* I was first stirred up to the study of wisdom; and still I was deferring to despise all earthly felicity, and to search out that whose not finding alone, but the bare seeking, ought to have been preferred before all the treasures and kingdoms of this world already found, and before all the pleasures of the body, though to be commanded for a nod. But I, wretched young fellow that I was, more wretched even in the very entrance into my youth, had even then begged chastity at Thy hands, and said: Give me chastity and continency, but do not give it yet. For I was afraid that Thou wouldst hear me too soon, and too soon deliver me from my disease of incontinency; which my desire was, rather to have satisfied than extinguished (*Confessions,* Bk. 8, Ch. 7, Loeb Library Edition). His real petition was contained in the words, *not yet.*

Thus sin infects the religious life at its profoundest depths, and tends to stop up the fountains from which healing should flow. Because true prayer will destroy it or be destroyed by it, it seeks to satisfy the hunger of the heart with substitutes which counterfeit genuine devotion, by repeating by rote formulas now devoid of meaning, while the real desires are low and wicked; or it thinks of the God of holy love as subject to the whims and evil passions of men and so ready to second their evil designs; or it leads them to abandon that devout intercession which will not blend harmoniously with vice and crime. "The prayer of the wicked is

sin." The universality of natural religion is proof that God has made us for Himself and that our heart is restless until it find rest in Him; but the failure of natural religion at its highest points—its worship of the Deity and its conception of His nature—demonstrates the need of divine intervention to repair the ruin of the race.

Now, it is the essence of the Christian faith that God has thus interposed with a great redemptive plan. Gospel teaching is solidly based upon gospel facts. It was necessary for us that the eternal should manifest Himself in time, that the Word should become flesh and dwell among us, that the long progress of revelation should reach its climax in a historical person who could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." It may be asserted with the greatest confidence that the criticism, not always friendly, of the evangelic records, has left the story of that incomparable Man unassailable in its fundamental features. If the proof of the historicity of these events cannot be accepted, there is an end to all legitimate reasoning from historical data. Indeed, if the gospels were discredited, we should need to reconstruct some such tale as that which they tell, to explain the changes which originated in that era.

"I know history," said a scholarly American statesman, "and I know that something happened in the first century that destroyed the old world and brought in the new." That "something" was a human life that was also divine, a tragic death in which faith has always found the remedy for sin, and a glorious resurrection. It is true that no fair, unprejudiced treatment of that which is written can eliminate the supernatural from these brief chronicles of what Jesus was and

what He did. Those who agree with the position maintained in these pages will feel no necessity for such elimination. We believe in the supernatural. The whole personality was incommensurable by ordinary earthly standards, and the miracle of what He was is as hard to understand as any of the wonders that He wrought.

There are those who are not disposed to go farther than to say that He was the best of men, the greatest of teachers, and the most perfect model ever offered for our imitation. They confess that He was the highest manifestation of God, that His communion with the Father was uninterrupted, and that we can know God as we never could otherwise have known Him, since Jesus lived. It is recognized, too, that no more perfect norm of conduct can be found than the principles which guided Him. This is the testimony of John Stuart Mill: "Nor even now, would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour to so live that Christ would approve our life (*Three Essays on Religion,* p. 255). We gratefully say, Amen, to such tributes to the "name all other names above." They are true as far as they go.

But they do not go far enough. They would never have been accepted as sufficient by the writers of the New Testament. They would not, it goes without saying, have satisfied St. Paul or St. John. And it can just as certainly be established that they fail to measure up to the conceptions of this august personality presented in the Synoptic Gospels. Moreover, it can be proved beyond a peradventure that an immeasurably profounder view has been held by historic Chris-

tianity from the beginning, and that, if it had not held this immeasurably profounder view, it would not have conquered the world, it would not have overcome Roman and Barbarian heathenism, it would not have had its glorious roll of martyrs and confessors, it would not have possessed the vitality which, in spite of faults and failures, has kept it a living force to this present day.

This profounder view is that Jesus is not only the highest example of faith in God, but that He is a proper object of faith as God, that He could perfectly manifest the Father because He was one with the Father, that He could present the divine ideal for our humanity because in Him the divine had entered into our humanity, that He was the Word made flesh, the pre-existent Logos incarnated and in our nature winning for us a complete victory over sin and death. "The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (I John 5:11). "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses" (II Corinthians 5:19). We insist that Jesus is not only our teacher and example, but also our Saviour and Lord.

The former position is no doubt defended by many who are most reverent and loyal to the Master, and even if their view prevailed, something would be left. The teaching of Him who spake as never man spake, and the inspiration of His wonderful life and His more than heroic death would still be with us to awaken noble purposes and to shame baseness and meanness. But it is enough to say that what would be left would not be the Christianity that has won the victories of the past, that has led men and women to glory in their sufferings and to despise the rack and stake, that has

not to this day lost its power to transform and ennoble common souls. And it may be most confidently asserted that this attenuated, devitalized gospel never could work these wonders. If that and nothing more had been the message that St. Paul carried into Europe, he would not have been accused of turning the world upside down, and the gods of Athens might have been spared the fate that Renan lamented.

If by drastic critical surgery we could dissect the supernatural from the New Testament and from the personality which is its centre, we might, to be sure, continue to praise its high ideals and its admirable ethics, but as it is we have in it a message of redeeming love which stoops down to reach the fallen and helpless, sets their feet upon a rock and establishes their goings.

There have been many theories of the atonement. The fact that no one of them seems altogether satisfactory is perhaps an indication that the reality is too great for our definition. A full discussion of this high subject would be out of place here. There are many angles from which it may be viewed, but we are to deal only with its relation to prayer. Do the demands of the devotional life give us any light on the nature of this supreme transaction? Are there ideas of it which naturally come to our lips when, under conviction of sin, we present our petitions to God? Are there other ideas of it which appeal to reason in some respects, but which seem remote and superficial to express our sense of what infinite grace has done for us? To ask whether a doctrine works, to try it by the standard of its value for religious experience, this is the pragmatic test which has its place in the spiritual realm as well as in the philosophical.

At least thus much may be said; in the hour of earnest supplication sin is very real, the wonder of deliverance from it past comprehension, and the explanation which appeals to the repentant heart must hold that the atonement was needed, that it actually accomplished something which could have been wrought out in no other way. Deep is the conviction at such times that it behooved the Christ to suffer, that there was an objective and even an eternal significance in the sacrifice of Calvary, and that its meaning was not exhausted in its subjective influence upon us, overwhelming as this influence ought rightly to be.

The love of God was the cause of redemption, and it has been said that a God who would make propitiation for sin did not need it. This is hardly the whole truth. Eternal righteousness is not merely the expression of arbitrary will. If it be rather an inherent characteristic of the divine nature and in fact just the reverse side of love itself, it may have demands which must be met. This eternal righteousness has its echo in our own hearts which refuse to be satisfied with a facile settlement of the problem of sin. The atonement certainly makes a difference to the soul that is under conviction of guilt; I think it made a difference to the Father, whose attitude to sin is reflected in that conviction.

Now, the vicarious principle is written large upon the scroll of nature. We are the heirs of all the ages. We possess blessings innumerable that have been bought for us by the labours and sufferings of others. For our liberties, our civilization, our inventions, our science, our literature, we are debtors to generations gone by that have slowly accumulated these treasures for us. We have powers of mind, aptitudes, tenden-

cies, which have been handed down to us by heredity from long lines of ancestors. The law has, too, its darker side, for we cannot enjoy its benefits and escape its responsibilities. There are depths of evil in us, conscious and unconscious, from which burst forth a continual stream of transgressions. And in the atonement God, too, acts on this vicarious principle, suffering for us and bearing our sins. The reality of the need is an argument for the reality of that which supplies it.

At any rate, it is singular how largely the language of vicarious sacrifice is employed in devotional literature, in hymns and prayers and confessions. Through the ages the Church has been reverently saying, "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers." That fiery controversialist, Augustus Toplady, rose above dogmatic differences and spoke for all who know the power of redemption in "Rock of Ages." The melancholy Cowper reached his greatest heights when he forgot himself and thought of the fountain in which sinners lose their guilty stains. Nay, those whose theology would hardly allow it, often in their hours of deepest consecration make use of similar expressions.

Ritschl, it is said, on his death-bed desired to have repeated Gerhardt's passion hymn, *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden.* That great-hearted thinker, Hermann, concedes that the believer can say "with a natural impulse, as he looks back upon Jesus' work, 'He suffers what we should have suffered'" (*Communion with God,* E. T., p. 135); and Horace Bushnell, whose experience of the grace of God was too profound for his theories, insists on the use of "altar symbols," . . .

" for it is in these symbols that God contrives to get us out of ourselves into the free state of faith and love," . . . " oppressed with guilt, we should turn ourselves joyfully to Christ as the propitiation of our sins, Christ, who hath borne the curse for us, Christ, who knew no sin, made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." " We want, in short, to use these altar terms, just as freely as they are used by those who accept the formula of expiation, or judicial satisfaction for sin; in just their manner, too, when they are using them most practically." " A more subjective gospel, one that looks to effects on character and the renewing of the life in God, has an even better right to their use; and they are almost indispensable, to save it from an otherwise nearly fatal subjectivity " (*The Vicarious Sacrifice,* pp. 536-538).

But is not this an admission that subjective views of the atonement will not stand the test of prayer, and that the full religious value of the doctrine can be conserved only by clinging to its objective validity?

The gospel, then, is a great, overwhelming, and costly exhibition of redeeming love. And the only fitting way to respond to this infinite grace is to open the heart to receive it, to let it come in and save us. This is really what is meant by justifying faith. It must build upon facts, and the fundamental fact for it is that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, that in spite of our sins the compassion, the friendship and the fellowship of the Father are ours without condition through the atonement of the Son of His love. But mere intellectual assent to such propositions as these is not enough; there must be assent with appropriate action; there must be trust and confidence. The gift

must be accepted. We must say, Yes, to the offer of forgiveness, for it will not be forced upon one who rejects it or is indifferent to it.

No one supposes that this is a state of mind which is so meritorious that it deserves the reward of eternal life. But it is a state of mind which throws wide the door for the entrance of salvation, or rather for the entrance of the Saviour through whom all gospel blessings are mediated. It brings the healing touch to cure the disease of sin, it brings our emptiness into contact with divine fulness, it brings our death to feel the reviving power of His life. This is not a mere dogma; it is rather an experience, which can be described in a doctrinal statement, though such statements are always inadequate. It is the acceptance by a guilty man of the free gift of God.

It is plain, then, that faith, in this high sense of the word, is just the spirit of prayer, that attitude of reverence and dependence and reliance which must be the basis of the fellowship of the finite with the infinite. Transgressions tend to make genuine supplications impossible—"if I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." But the cure for transgressions is in the mercy of God, to whom our supplications are addressed. Sin is the enemy of prayer, but, by the grace of Him that loved us and gave Himself for us, prayer will conquer sin. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

For the man whose unworthiness makes him unwilling to lift his eyes to heaven finds at the cross the motive and the power to gird him for all noble endeavour and all high communion with God. The knowledge that through the sufferings of the Son of God there is now no condemnation, but instead the blessed hope of

eternal life—this is the thing that will awaken love and gratitude and loyalty and a desire to serve Him in life and in death. This is an aspect of the atonement which is emphasized in unison even by those who differ widely in their explanations of it. Its moral influence is immeasurable.

"O generous love! that He who smote
In man, for man, the foe
The double agony in Man
For man should undergo.

"And in the garden secretly,
And on the cross on high
Should teach His brethren and inspire
To suffer and to die."

—NEWMAN.

There are those—and surely they do not understand the drawing might of grace nor even the workings of the human heart—who insist that sinners who are freely pardoned will feel that restraints are now removed and will plunge into depths of iniquity with impunity. It is charged that the idea of salvation as God's gift received by faith alone lowers the standard of righteousness. The accusation of Antinomianism has been levelled against St. Paul. But the experience of the saints proves that what is needed to make the soul holy and brave and unselfish and loving is to fill it with great aspirations, great impulses, great thoughts, great heroism, and that some spark of this divine fire is enkindled in the dullest by the conviction that Jesus died for him. This is the united testimony of the redeemed. "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation" (II Corinthians 5:17, R. V. Margin). The wall of separation that made prayer impossible is gone. Worship of and friendship with God, who saves, bring

growing satisfaction, which deepens with the consciousness that it is not deserved, but is all of grace.

"Now I saw in my dream that the highway upon which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall is called Salvation. Up this way therefore did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back. He ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a Cross, and a little below in the bottom a Sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that, just as Christian came up with the Cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more. Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death."—JOHN BUNYAN.

XI

PRAYER AND SUFFERING

"Anfangs wollt' ich fast verzagen
Und ich glaubt,' Ich trüg' es nie;
Und ich hab' es doch getragen,—
Aber fragt mich nur nicht: wie?"

—HEINE.

"Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the New; which carrieth the greater benediction and the clearer revelation of God's favour. Yet, even in the Old Testament, if you listen to David's harp, you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon. . . . Certainly virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed."—BACON.

ONE of the difficult problems both for the thinker and the common man is, Why is there so much suffering in the world, indeed, why is there suffering at all? Rare indeed are the lives which have not had a good share of joy and satisfaction, and the extremest pessimists cannot convince us that the proportion of pain to pleasure is so preponderant as to render existence an evil. But the rejection of such extreme views must not blind us to the reality of the travail of creation and to the perplexing questions that it raises.

The threads of sorrow are woven into the warp and woof of existence. The lives of wild animals and of savage men must be frequently subject to sharp agonies. To be the victor or the victim of predatory violence is the normal lot of the individual. There is

little or no care for the aged or the sick or the weak. The right to rule belongs to the strongest, and he, when years have sapped his vigour, must succumb to some younger and fiercer rival; who in his turn will fall before a new champion. Children receive little care, great numbers of them die in infancy and usually only the more hardy grow to maturity. In these primitive conditions there is a grim struggle in which self-preservation is the first law, modified indeed, we are told, in the course of evolution by increasing parental love and the dawnings of altruistic feeling. Nature is "red in tooth and claw with ravine."

We like to think that with advancing progress suffering is being eliminated. The ruthlessness that prevails among the lower creatures and among barbarians is in large measure suppressed. Helpless infancy receives care and devotion. Old age is respected and given its right to rest and be cared for. There are hospitals for the sick. All the resources of science are directed to the study of disease, and medical knowledge and skill have virtually eradicated some maladies that used to slay their thousands, and can cure or alleviate most of the ills that flesh is heir to. Cold and heat, storm and drought, have no such terror for us as for uncivilized men, because we have comfortable homes, abundant clothing, and a very considerable control of the forces of nature, which has often made the desert to blossom as the rose, and has transformed the tempestuous sea into the highway of commerce. And some optimists venture to hope that the time may come when all our distempers and privations will be done away in the onward march of the race.

But there are others, and they are by no means sour pessimists, who see no prospect of reaching such a

Utopia in the ordinary course of earthly events. Even in the most advanced regions there are persons, and indeed whole classes, whom these philanthropies have scarcely touched, submerged tenths that are kept under by the dead weight of the superincumbent humanity. Our highly organized society produces evils from which simpler communities are exempt.

Because of the extensive use of machinery the man counts for less and less. The capitalistic system, with its remarkable efficiency and productiveness, has separated the worker and the employer, destroyed the old intimacy and friendship, and created a bitter class hatred, dwarfing and crushing numberless lives. The ethics of business is too often the ethics of the jungle making use of the methods and weapons of civilization. War, that most irrational and futile way of settling differences, has not yet been banished from the globe, and when it breaks out, as in the great cataclysm from which the nations have thus far scarcely recovered, the old ugly passions are unleashed and the primeval conflicts are fought again with the latest enginery of science. "Alas, then," exclaims Carlyle, "is man's civilization only a wrappage, through which the savage nature of him can still burst, infernal as ever? Nature still makes him; and has an Infernal in her as well as a Celestial" (*French Revolution,* Vol. III, p. 210).

Indeed, on other grounds, it is quite open to question whether there is much less suffering in highly cultivated society than among savages or the lower animals. Outward conditions have grown better, but wants and sensitiveness have also increased. There are brief moments of exquisite agony for the beasts of the jungle, but the period during which the prey of the lion or tiger is in actual pain is doubtless short, and to

the survivors the loss of a companion is one of the ordinary incidents of the day, the terror passing with the danger that caused it.

Something of the same callousness to fear and privation is probably characteristic of the wild tribes of Africa and Australia. But with the growth of mind and morals the power of feeling has also grown. The dullest Kaffir is more affected by pain than his dog, the cultivated Englishman more than the Kaffir, the poet or artist more than the ordinary layman. The poorest workman of today is doubtless better clothed, better fed, better housed, than the serf under the Mediæval Feudal System, but it is not certain that he is happier.

Mental and spiritual distresses are rather harder to bear than those that are merely physical, and capacity for the former tends to keep pace with the elevation of the standards of living and general progress. Nay, the physical ailments themselves show no signs of disappearing. The pangs that are the price of the beginning of a new life are perhaps greater, with all the care of skilled physicians and nurses, than among the wanderers of the deserts, and the terrors of death are just as formidable. The inhabitants of the Soudan are not in great danger from trains running at a speed of sixty miles an hour. Such a disaster as that which befell the *Titanic* hardly threatened the ships of the Vikings. And our triumph over the air, by which such notable results have been achieved in peace and in war, has cost blood and agony.

In truth, the crux of the problem is that, whatever its origin, suffering seems now to be a part of the constitution of nature. The pangs of hunger and thirst are necessary to make sure that the body shall have

sufficient food and drink. Fire must scorch us and cold must sting, in order that life may not be destroyed without warning by these elements. The struggle for life is grim and bloody and a multitude of creatures sustain existence only by the death of others. There are insects which are so prolific that they would overwhelm the earth were they not eaten by other insects and birds. These in turn are the natural prey of those still stronger. And harsh and inhuman as this struggle seems, we ourselves are constantly taking part in it.

The tables of the most refined people who shudder at the sight of blood can be furnished only by the ruthless slaughter of fish and fowl and cattle; yet there are few strict vegetarians. The fact that we should be horrified to have our own hands stained with gore in no way changes the essential truth that we prey upon other animals, on the same principle at bottom as the "dragons of the prime, that tare each other in their slime." We eat at the cost of the mortal agony of lower organisms.

The meaning of all this is certainly hard to fathom. It is clear that we must make a distinction between physical and moral evil, "evil that may be suffered and evil that may be done" (Fairbairn, *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion,* p. 134). The two exist together and have mutual relations, but the attempt to establish a quantitative equation in each individual experience between sin and suffering has always been a futile failure. The vehement protest of the book of Job cannot be answered, and Jesus said that the eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them were not sinners above all the Galileans.

That a very large part of the sorrow and anguish of earth is caused by wickedness is beyond question.

" Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn." But as the grim and bloody struggle for existence must have raged for ages before the human race developed, we can maintain that physical evil is the result of moral evil only on the assumption that there was rebellion in the realm of spirits before the world began—an assumption which may be quite possible. But there are at least certain kinds of dissatisfaction which seem to be incidental accompaniments of our progress and with which we should not wish to dispense. The weariness that comes from vigorous toil, the hard exertion by which difficulties are overcome and the thrill of victory is won, the wrestling with doubts which leads to a higher and clearer apprehension of truth—these are " growing pains " which apparently are indispensable in the development of finite beings (Fairbairn, *Op. Cit.*, p. 135).

" We have need here," says Principal Fairbairn, " to clear our minds of cant and to recognize frankly that even heaven cannot be the mere synonym of the agreeable, and ought not to be conceived as if it were. If men in beatitude are to know discipline, they must put forth effort; and if there is to be effort there must be strain; and if there is to be strain, there must be emulation; and if there is to be emulation, there must be the divine rivalry which finds pleasure in excelling and in the endeavour to excell " (*Op. Cit.*, p. 135).

" Then, welcome each rebuff,
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!"

—Browning.

But these considerations do not solve the problem of the existence of suffering. Great thinkers have long been deeply troubled to explain why there should be so much distress and agony in the realm of a God who is good. The conclusion of extreme pessimism that this is the worst of possible worlds or at least that existence is so bad that it were better not to be, need hardly be taken seriously as a doctrine; indeed it is doubtful if its philosophical defenders themselves took it too seriously in practical life.

There are others who take refuge in the thought that God is finite, and that the material with which He works is too unmanageable to be moulded fully into accord with His will. John Stuart Mill, who drew up so powerful an indictment of the cruelty of Nature, pronounces this judgment: "It may be possible to believe with Plato that perfect goodness, limited and thwarted in every direction by the intractableness of the material, has done this because it could do no better. But that the same perfectly wise and good being had absolute power over the material, and made it, by voluntary choice, what it is; to admit this might have been supposed impossible to anyone who has the simplest notions of moral good and evil" (*Three Essays on Religion,* p. 41).

In more recent times a similar position has been maintained by Mr. H. G. Wells. In his great war novel, Mr. Britling, who has lost his son, thus talks with Letty, who thinks she has lost her husband: "It is the theologians who must answer that. They have been extravagant about God. They have silly, absolute ideas—that He is all-powerful, that He is omni-everything. But the common sense of men knows better. Every real religious thought denies it. After

all, the real God of the Christians is Christ, not God Almighty; a poor mocked and wounded God nailed on a cross of matter—some day He will triumph—but it is not fair to say that He causes all things now. It is not fair to make out a case against Him. You have been misled. It is a theologian's folly. God is not absolute. God is finite." (*Mr. Britling Sees it Through,* p. 406).

But such a statement is itself extravagant. He who believes human freedom is a reality, however restricted in range, need not hesitate to say that there is so far a limitation of the divine infinitude. The extremest predestinarian refuses to allow that God is the author of sin; Jonathan Edwards would agree only that He was the permitter of it. And as to the oppression and violence and cruelty of man to man, as to that vast amount of suffering which is directly caused by crimes and folly, as to the wars that devastate the earth and may, if they continue, wreck civilization—we may almost say that God has nothing to do with them. That He overrules the wrath of man and makes it praise Him, we gladly believe. I refuse to think of Him as only struggling against blind insensate fate, with the issue still in the balance, though there are good prospects of victory. His greatest purposes cannot be thwarted.

Thus there is a vast deal of physical evil which is the result of moral evil, and for this evil we, and not the Creator who endowed us with the invaluable, but dangerous, gift of choice, are responsible. I decline to speak of a finite God. But some of the difficulties connected with the fact of suffering can thus be lightened by the thought of a self-limited God.

Making all allowance, however, for the dissatisfac-

tion which is incidental to growth, and for the suffering, which is inflicted by the free choice of moral beings, there still remains unexplained a great volume of loss and misery, running through the ages, playing its part in nature's processes. The idea that it is punitive cannot be maintained so far as this present life is concerned. But may it not be educative and disciplinary? Indeed, there can be no question that it has performed that function for us all from the dawn of consciousness. The lessons have been learned slowly and often instinctively, but the severity of the instructor has compelled obedience. "Nature, in order that she may be beneficent, must be inexorable in her laws" (Fairbairn, *Op. Cit.*, p. 140). Sorrow itself is a training-school in which some of the most beautiful traits of character, some of the most heavenly graces, are called out and developed.

I reject out of hand the idea that pleasure is the ultimate goal in life. Enjoyment is not the end of existence; but it—or the lack of it—may be a means toward the attainment of that end. "There is for man a higher than happiness. He can do without happiness, and instead thereof get blessedness." The purpose for which we are here must be the attainment of character, the development of our powers, the establishment of the Kingdom of God, in short, holiness in its individual and social aspects. And it can be won only in the conflict. Innocence, if we possessed it fully, would not be enough. For innocence is weak; holiness is strong. Innocence is pure because it has not been tempted; holiness has met temptation and overcame it and wears the crown of victory. Innocence was characteristic of the first Adam, who fell; holiness, of the second Adam, who conquered sin and

death for us. And a strong, manly holiness can grow only in conflict with adverse forces, where blows have to be given and received and where the soul may learn the value of the highest things by paying the price of winning them.

Undoubtedly it is true that in many cases affliction shows no healing power. Perhaps it may be said of both pain and pleasure in themselves that they have no definite moral tendency. Their effect upon the soul depends upon how they are received. There are those whom sorrow leaves hard and bitter and resentful, just as there are those whom enjoyments make fat and luxuriant and complacent. But assuredly a world in which suffering exists as well as joy is a most admirable arena for the struggle to attain moral and spiritual growth. Such a regime gives opportunity for bravery, endurance, perseverance, the temper that grapples with obstacles and refuses to wince under blows. It may drive one to higher reaches of faith in God, to flight into the refuge of the everlasting arms. Perhaps stumbling-blocks are left in our way that we may overcome them. Perhaps losses are permitted that we may rise superior to dependence upon earthly things. Perhaps spiritual enemies assail us that we may have the incentive to win victories.

The persecutions of the early Christians were a great wrong, unspeakable cruelties being inflicted on those who had committed no crime and were the best people of their times; but those persecutions were the occasion of a wondrous display of devotion and heroism such as few ages of the Church have witnessed. These outrages gave the martyrs their chance, as Ignatius and others seem to have felt. And in the later centuries there was a certain wistful longing for those

better times in which circumstances were so hard but the spirits of men triumphed so serenely over them.

Now, it is possible to prove superior to adversity in a lower or a higher way. We cannot withhold our admiration for him who grimly endures pain and defies the agony which tortures him. We give this sort of homage to the Prometheus of Eschylus, and even Milton's Satan. There is fine proof of the superiority of the spirit to mere things, when it can say,

"In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody but unbowed.

"Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me unafraid."

—HENLEY.

But there have been still more splendid victories when rare souls—and often common souls—have made of their suffering stepping-stones to higher things. "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh," writes one who had endured bodily afflictions such as fall to the lot of few, "a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch. Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon me." And the same man, soon to be led to the block where the headsman would end his career, exultantly exclaims, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is

laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." Here is more than mere patience; more than unflinching endurance. Here is a temper that has nothing in common with

> *"The unconquerable will*
> *And study of revenge, immortal hate,*
> *And courage never to submit or yield,*
> *And what is else not to be overcome."*
>
> —MILTON.

It is rather a pæan of victory, a jubilant shout as the diadem is won.

Let it be repeated, a world of suffering is a field admirably adapted to the fighting of such battles and the achieving of such triumphs. But the pains and losses do not of necessity produce these results, they have no essential tendency to awaken the high motives and ideals whose alchemy can transform the base metal of disappointments and agony into the pure gold of courage and faith and hope and love. This celestial armory against the trials that threaten to overwhelm us becomes our possession only through fellowship with God. It is prayer in its broad meaning that will solve this problem.

For in prayer we are brought into contact with infinite resources of helpfulness and sympathy. God has not kept suffering out of His universe, but He has in all generations been the dwelling-place of the sufferer. In modern times an old question once, as it was supposed, finally settled, has been brought up again, Can God Himself suffer? The ancient Patripassians were no doubt guilty of serious error, but the essence of their error was the denial of the Trinity. Perhaps, however, there is literal truth in the saying of the Old

Testament prophet, "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them" (Isaiah 63:9, the Queri reading). Surely the atonement was made by the Father who gave His only-begotten Son, as well as by the Christ who hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

"Theology," says Principal Fairbairn, "has no falser idea than that of the impassibility of God. If He is capable of sorrow He is capable of suffering; and were He without the capacity for either, He would be without any feeling of the evil or the sin or the misery of man. The very truth that came by Jesus Christ may be said to be summed up in the passibility of God" (*The Place of Christ in Modern Theology,* p. 483). Jesus never exhibited the heart of the eternal more truly, never could He more emphatically say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," than when He endured the agony of the cross.

In truth, the capacity for suffering is just the other side of the capacity for joy and love. It is therefore beyond our comprehension how even an infinite person can have an emotional life at all, unless it be a complete emotional life with the shadow as well as the sunshine, how God can be love and yet have no sense of loss through the sin and shame of His creatures. But naturally when we try to conceive what this must mean for an infinite person, we deal with a very profound mystery. The difficulty which to us seems insuperable is that perfect bliss, such as we must attribute to the deity, would apparently be marred by any feelings approaching to sadness or disappointment.

Yet for us joy is really heightened because sorrow so often mingles with it. We are apt to think that life in heaven itself would be dull and leaden, if there were

no risks to be run, no least chance of adventure. Such an estate might be absolutely free from danger, but perhaps also devoid of exultation and rapture. Supremely great music often contains harsh dissonances. A wooden-minded editor of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* proposed, it is said, to make a correction in the Andante where a high note, held through several measures, is sharply discordant. But the editor was wrong, for the discord is resolved into a haunting harmony whose beauty is emphasized by contrast, and would not have been so delightful without it. So, too, our happiness seems to be deepened by the pensive undertones that can be heard.

But we are creatures of time, and our sorrows, when they come, usually for the moment absorb our whole attention, though soon the clouds may be scattered and the sun shine once more. Pain and pleasure are commonly successive, not simultaneous. It is hard to be sad and glad at the same instant; one feeling is almost sure to prevail over the other and destroy it. And we certainly cannot think of the Eternal as now plunged in gloom, and now filled with exultation.

But He is superior to time. If we follow Professor Royce, the " time-span," the real present, is with us a matter of a few seconds, whereas with the infinite mind it includes all time (*The World and the Individual,* Vol. II, p. 111 ff.). In this eternity indeed He knows things under their temporal relations, and brings them to pass under temporal relations. But in the divine mind all are included in an everlasting Now, all are parts of one infinite experience. If in it sorrow be found, in it, too, will be the joy that is more abundant. Both pain and bliss may doubtless be far more intense in the heart of God than we can understand, but they

are combined in one whole, and the suffering, like the discords of a symphony, contributes its share to heighten the harmony.

However this may be, the supreme proof of the sympathy of God with our suffering, and even of His participation in it, is presented in the life and death of Christ. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. We cannot but think that the passion of the Master reflects the very heart of God, that His agony for us on the cross showed how the Father through all the ages has felt towards us. The Lamb was "slain from the foundation of the world."

"Would I suffer for Him that I love? So wouldst thou—so wilt thou!
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in."

—Browning.

Now, here surely are resources with which to meet triumphantly the worst tribulations of earth. Suffering has not been banished from life, but in this divine light it has a new meaning. It is a means to our education, a training in self-discipline. It gives us the chance to "rise on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things." It is the arena in which we may win the crown of patience and heroism. And the world of sorrow gives us unlimited openings for efforts on behalf of others, that the losses of our neighbour may be made more bearable, and that the wrongs of man to man may be stopped; for physical as well as moral evil is a thing to be overcome.

Best of all, we have a Father in heaven full of infi-

nite sympathy for us in the struggle, nay, partaking with us in the struggle—afflicted in all our afflictions, and giving the supreme manifestation of redeeming love in the passion of the Son of His love. We are working and, it may be, enduring with Him. The victory is sure. And meanwhile by His grace we can conquer the ills of the present, or His strength will be made perfect in our weakness so that we can bear what must be borne.

"After this it was noised abroad that Mr. Valiant-for-truth was taken with a summons by the same post as the other, and had this for a token that the summons was true, that his pitcher was broken at the fountain. When he understood it he called for his friends and told them of it. Then said he, I am going to my Father's, and though with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles who now will be my Rewarder. When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the riverside, into which as he went he said, Death, where is thy sting? And as he went down deeper he said, Grave, where is thy victory? So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."—JOHN BUNYAN.

XII

PRAYER AND BODILY HEALING

"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote,
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?"

—SHAKESPEARE.

"But warm, sweet, tender, even yet,
A present help is He;
And faith has still its Olivet
And love its Galilee.

"The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again."

—WHITTIER.

TO a great thinker and saint is attributed the statement, "Sickness is the natural state of the Christian." The modern mind rejects such a view as unreal, monastic, and utterly unnatural. Our ideal is *Mens sana in corpore sano*. We regard the whole man, soul and body, and even the whole society in which he lives, as the subject of redemption. To those who believe that the resurrection means something more than the continued life of the spirit, there is a sacredness in the material frame, and it must be counted not the prison, but the home of the soul, still "united to Christ," even when it "rests in the grave."

Moreover, if theology had nothing to say on the matter, psychology would teach us this lesson, since it insists so strongly on the close connection between mind and brain, is much inclined—though there are dissenting voices—to affirm that our whole mental life in all its details is conditioned by, and mediated through, the physical organism, can conclusively prove that lesions or diseases in the cerebral tract will limit or in part destroy the powers of perception and thought, and in general has thoroughly established that the two sides of our nature are related in a most intimate way, disorder in the one being constantly reflected in the other, a sluggish liver being likely to produce the conviction that the time is out of joint, and a bad conscience just as likely to put the nerves on edge and lower the vitality. It does not, then, indicate that one cares too much for earthly interests, if one offer the petition, "Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (III John 2).

That we may not, however, lose our sense of proportion a word of caution may not be out of place. Bodily health is undoubtedly a great blessing, but it is not the supreme blessing. A feeble or disordered physical organism is a serious handicap to the intellectual and spiritual life, but it is a handicap over which great souls and even common souls have again and again triumphed; it is a swamp out of whose ooze and slime have often grown the beautiful lilies of patience and trust and love and far vision. Not a few of the great achievements of the human mind have been accomplished in spite of such clogs. We count among our rarest treasures the epics of blind Homer and blind Milton, the music of blind Handel, blind Bach, and

deaf Beethoven. Our literature has been immensely enriched by sickly Pope, club-footed Byron, crippled Scott, and consumptive Keats.

Let it be put down to the credit of Herbert Spencer, even by those who have no sympathy with his philosophy, that his voluminous works, containing much that all concede to be of permanent value, were thought out notwithstanding a life-time of chronic invalidism. Two of our greatest American historians, Prescott and Parkman, were, during many years, virtually deprived of sight, and had to make use of the eyes of others in their labourious investigations. The records of the saints, too, tell of many ethereal spirits that were imprisoned in weak earthly tabernacles. Paul reminds the Galatians that it was on account of an infirmity of the flesh that he preached the gospel to them at the first and recalls with gratitude that they did not despise nor reject that which was a temptation to them in his flesh. The elephantiasis of Job was not an evidence of the anger of God, though his friends, and he himself at first, thought so.

Every pastor knows of "shut-ins" who have perhaps spent decades in helplessness and pain, all the while growing ripe for the kingdom of God, and from these He sometimes learns more of the things above than from all the theologians and commentators. The great war has left in its wake multitudes of maimed, wrecked lives, and everyone acknowledges that it is because these men were brave and true and refused to act the part of poltroons that they suffered these things.

But while we rejoice in these victories over bodily debility and are fain to think that such signs of the soul's superiority to its environment are a hint of its immortality, we must insist that a sound healthy frame

is desirable, that sickness is an abnormality, an aberration from the ideal of nature, and that he who by neglect or breach of the laws that govern the material organism brings upon himself incapacity or disease, is guilty of a moral wrong. Generally speaking, physical vigour is conducive to clear and sound mental activity and to growth in grace; it helps one to "see life steadily and see it whole," and even to enter into fellowship with the Father in heaven.

The athletic Greeks, who coveted above all else the honours of the victor at the Olympic games, have been the intellectual teachers of the world. It may be admitted that in some of our modern educational institutions, Hellenic ideals find more devotees in the athletic than in the intellectual field, that the culture of brawn is pursued with a more single aim than the culture of brain, but I am not sure that this extreme is not on the whole better than its opposite. In short, it is our duty, so far as in us lies, to be robust in health.

It would seem, then, superfluous to argue that men ought always to pray not only for spiritual blessings, but for sturdy muscles and calm nerves, and for the healing of the sick. Our petitions ought to cover all the interests of our lives. Anything which we may rightly desire and work for, may rightly find a place in our supplications. This is a realm in which we seek tangible results, in which therefore it is easier to test the reality of the answers. And though we must strongly protest against any plans, such as those proposed by Professor Tyndall more than a generation ago, which proceed upon the implication that the effects of our visits to the throne of grace can be measured by the thermometer and the stethoscope, we strongly affirm that we are authorized to ask deliver-

ance from the lassitudes and distempers of the flesh, and may confidently expect that such requests will be graciously heard.

In recent times there has been a tendency to hold not only that it is our duty to seek health, but that religion can banish disease. It is, of course, not a new truth that peace of conscience is the best nerve sedative, that useless fear and carking care may bring on the very troubles that are dreaded, that a merry heart doeth good like a medicine, and that faith in the Creator and Preserver of our bodies, expressed in prayer to Him, does sometimes accomplish more than the skill of physicians. But, unfortunately, the chief protagonists of physical healing through mental and spiritual influence have based their practice upon certain philosophical and theological vagaries which cannot be accepted.

Most important among the cults which profess to cure the ills that flesh is heir to, if we may judge by the number and indeed the culture of its adherents, is Christian Science. It is extraordinary what a vogue this so-called "divine metaphysics" has had, even in most intelligent circles. I am inclined to think that the flood-tide of its power is now past, that it is already on the wane, especially since its founder paid the debt of nature and was found, as one of her followers said, "in error;" but I have an uneasy feeling that perhaps the wish is father to the thought.

The claims that Mrs. Eddy made on behalf of her discovery, as she called it, were almost boundless. Had Lord Bacon lived to our day, he might have seen in the success of this new doctrine a fresh illustration of the thesis of his essay on Boldness. I fancy the boldness is part of the secret of the success, for the

practitioner who brings to his work the most absolute confidence, may, because of that fact, charm away many of those ailments which are amenable to the influence of suggestion. The declaration is repeatedly made in *Science and Health* that diseases of all kinds, functional and organic, have been cured, and making considerable allowance for the enthusiasm of a propagandist, there must be a measure of truth in these assertions.

There is no reason to doubt the reality of the healing in many cases, though amputated limbs have not been restored and the faithful, following the example of the founder of the sect, often patronize the dentist. Probably many that have been helped are neurotics, hypochondriacs, who needed only to be convinced that they were well to become so; but the good results have not been limited to such cases. It must be frankly confessed that there have been remarkable phenomena to substantiate in part the enormous pretensions of this latest religion, that broken, disheartened invalids have been given, as it were, a fresh lease on life, and that this is in the main the secret of the rapid growth of the Church of Christ, Scientist.

Meanwhile, it should not be forgotten that the same thing can be said (and quite as well supported) of the work of faith-healers, the guardians of the relics of the saints—and that, too, when the relics can be proved to be spurious—and even psychologists who approach the matter purely from the scientific point of view.

There may, then, be something to learn from Mrs. Eddy, but the value of her methods and ideals is vitiated by the fact that they are based upon an absurdly crude and false philosophy and upon an almost blasphemous religion. Her fundamental assertion that

God is all, is evidently to be taken in a pantheistic sense—He is the only reality. Matter, sin, sickness, and death have no existence. Whence, then, come they, or rather, whence comes the fatuous belief that they are here? The answer is to be found in other conceptions of the system. Concerning human nature, two terms are used and apparently always discriminated, Man and Mortal Mind. Man is the idea of God, he reflects God, he is the idea realized in divine science; though he has individuality he is not a spirit, for that would mean that there are many spirits, whereas Spirit, the Ego, is but one. Leaving out of account the Pantheism which shows itself in many of these expressions, the idea is somewhat analogous to that of the "new man" of Pauline theology, though the thought of regeneration is absent.

But when we come to Mortal Mind, the source of all our troubles and illusions stands revealed. It is itself indeed an unreal thing. It is defined as "nothing claiming to be something—error creating other errors" (*Science and Health,* p. 591). But though it has no existence, it gives some sort of being to sin, sickness, and death; nay, matter itself is but a creation of this same unsubstantial phantasm. So this side of our nature which, though it is quite intangible, manages to play havoc in the universe, answers roughly to what the apostle calls the "carnal mind."

God, then, is all and there is nothing but God. All that is material and evil is delusion, an hallucination of Mortal Mind, which is itself an hallucination. It is a shadow, and its product is a shadow's shadow. It is nothing and its product is nothing caused by nothing. All that is needed, therefore, to free one's self from the errors denominated sin, sickness, and death, is through

divine metaphysics to realize that they are nonentities and to rise above them into the realm of spirit. How Mortal Mind ever came to be, even as a negation; how, if it be a vacuum, there can be a vacuum in a universe which God fills—of this riddle, so far as I know, an explanation has never been attempted. It remains as inexplicable as the mysterious nature of Riley's " Squigicum Squees 'at swallers their selves."

Of the consequences for thought and for religion of such philosophy it is hardly necessary to say much. Such monstrous conclusions do not follow from the conception of an infinite God, unless one first put into that conception the pantheistic conclusion which one intends to reach—like the Scotsman who, according to Sir Robertson Nicol, offered to prove that the grapes of his native land were better than those of England, and began his argument with the statement, " I maun premeese that I like grapes sour." In a true sense God is all, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, but that does not imply that His is the sole agency at work. To say that He could not make beings in His own image and endue them with a certain modicum of freedom and initiative, is to assert a limitation of His power at the very point where boundless love would wish to use it. Sin and its results come from this freedom of the creature and to deny its existence while devising a whole system to get rid of it, is to display the exceeding wisdom of the ostrich which has been said to hide its head in the sand to escape its pursuer.

The doctrine that matter is unreal and evil is not new and also it is not true. Indeed, if the phenomenal world is an illusion, there is no escape from certain awkward inferences to which, so far as I know, Mrs. Eddy never refers. We recognize one another, we are

acquainted with one another, only by means that are material—or at least any more direct connection of our spirits is as yet a matter of conjecture. We see "the human face divine," we hear sounds that are full of meaning to us, we touch the hands of those we love, and from such outward signals we read the message of the personality, to whom we attribute thoughts and emotions like our own. But the thousand ways by which our souls hold mutual intercourse depend in general upon that medium which is the creation of Mortal Mind, and so by this hypothesis are of the earth, earthy, and utterly illusory. The faces that I see are matter; the sounds that I hear are vibrations of the air which is matter—and matter is unreal and evil! Can we, then, accept as true that which we learn only on its evidence? It is a negation, it is false and deceiving, a figment of Mortal Mind which itself is "nothing claiming to be something—error creating other errors."

The facts upon the basis of which I have assumed that I knew my friends and companions, turn out not to be facts at all. The conviction is inevitable, then, that I am alone in the world. I can put no confidence in the proofs of the existence of any creatures other than myself. All the sights and sounds that led me to think that I was surrounded by kindred spirits are the eerie phantoms, the bad dreams, the haunting chimeras of my own Mortal Mind, which, like "Sairy Gamp" in the story of Dickens, keeps repeating, "Mrs. Harris, she says," and "I says to Mrs. Harris," when there is no Mrs. Harris. It is impossible to evade the logic of Christian Science teaching. It means Solipsism, and Solipsism means intellectual suicide. We cannot take such a system seriously, though it has relieved suffer-

ing and brightens many lives. The secrets of its success can be explored without an acceptance of its absurd doctrines.

With certain zealous Christians who are usually denominated " faith-healers " we feel much more sympathy. They are for the most part also deeply religious people of high character and great activity. They do not make as much ado as the students of *Science and Health,* but their success in dealing with diseases seems to be proportionately as great. If they taught only that sickness is an abnormality, that God has unlimited power to heal and the love which will prompt Him to do so, if it is best, and that it is our privilege to seek His help at all times, specifically asking Him to rebuke the distempers of the flesh and deliver those who are suffering from them, we should heartily agree with them. But they base their practice on dogmas which cannot be accepted.

Their fundamental principle is that the atonement of the Lord Jesus provides for the immediate restoration of the body as well as for the forgiveness of transgressions, that the former as truly as the latter has been bought for us by the sacrifice of Calvary, that we have the right to claim it by faith on the basis of the perfect work of the Saviour, and that to remain under the dominion of any physical malady is to exhibit a kind of unbelief, Christ being our sickness-bearer as well as our sin-bearer. They defend their position by appealing to several passages of Scripture. One, from the closing verses of the gospel according to St. Mark, may be set aside because of doubt as to their genuineness. Much is made of the quotation from the book of Isaiah in the first gospel, " Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases " (Matthew 8:17).

But the connection makes it clear that there is here no reference to the vicarious death of Christ. It was at Capernaum, and He had cast out evil spirits and cured those that were ill. It is this work of sympathy and mercy that the evangelist regards as the fulfilment of the ancient prediction, and plainly he is not thinking of the atonement, except as the whole life was an atonement.

A third Scripture urged in support of this contention is the direction of St. James that in case of sickness the elders of the Church should be called, to pray and anoint with oil, with the assurance that the prayer of faith would save the sick and the Lord would raise him up. The anointing with oil may be intended as a ritual observance or as a remedial agent. But what we have here is an encouragement to intercede for others even in the matter of health, and a gracious promise of results. (The theory is thoroughly analysed and discussed by the late Dr. B. B. Warfield in *Counterfeit Miracles*.)

Certainly, if this be a true teaching, it must have a much wider application than is allowed by its defenders. It would mean deliverance from physical death as well as physical disease. Medical practitioners sometimes say of the aged that they have passed away without any sickness, the material organism simply ceasing to operate, but such cases are probably of the rarest. It was held by Metchnikoff that almost invariably the end came because of some lesion or disorder of a vital part. Indeed, according to the same high authority, old age itself is a malady. It is surely, then, not an exaggeration to say that, if the body could be kept in perfect health it would not die. Of course, accidents and deeds of violence carry men off, but ill-

ness in the last analysis is for the most part of the same nature, resulting from the activity of micro-organisms which are intruders in the system. John Keats was murdered by the Bacillus Tuberculosus, and even the veteran Gladstone, if Metchnikoff was right, by the germs which bring on old age.

However that may be, we must insist that if the Christian is redeemed by the sacrifice of the cross from the distempers that afflict the flesh, he is also redeemed from its final dissolution. But none of the saints in all the ages since the Lord walked the earth have escaped the last enemy, though they have met him and won the victory over him; and I refuse to admit that during all these centuries the purposes of infinite mercy have been wholly thwarted.

The theory betrays decidedly confused thinking about the matter of salvation (See Warfield, *Op. Cit.*, p. 176). The whole man indeed, body and soul, is ransomed, and that too through the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God. The resulting deliverance, however, has different aspects, and each part is wrought out in its due order. Release from all sinfulness is just as certainly an element of the great deliverance as is freedom from condemnation, but it does not come in one single experience, never to be repeated, though some who have a leaning to perfectionism seem almost to imply as much. Salvation is in one aspect an objective fact, in another an experience of the soul. The objective fact stands firm and unchangeable, but the experience of the soul must be progressive and gradual. The first is obtained, but the second must be attained. Our justification, which concerns our relation to God, is from the first complete and perfect. Our sanctification, which is quite as essential a part of the process,

must always be partial until we awake in His likeness. Now, the redemption of the body, too, is included in the great atoning purpose; but the Apostle Paul was still looking for it as a thing that lay in the future and obviously thought of it as a goal that would be reached only at the resurrection (Romans 8:24).

It can merely do harm, then, to assert that health may be claimed here and now on the same basis as our freedom from condemnation. Our hope of eternal life is not subject to such fluctuations as is the physical vigour even of those whose faith is strongest. If one is attacked by influenza is his peace with God put in jeopardy to the same extent? These are indeed temples of the Holy Spirit, these earthly tabernacles in which we dwell, but the time when they are to be made perfect is not yet come.

For the rest, this theory scarcely leaves room in the Christian life for chastisement, yet the Scriptures hold that it has a place and that it is a sign not of anger but of love. Chastening is not punishment. It may sometimes be the result of sin, but it is not the penalty of sin. To those who are in Christ Jesus disappointments, sufferings, even death itself, are transformed into blessings which help the pilgrim on his way to the celestial city. But the logic of this way of thinking would mean that these things are evidence of a lack of faith, and need never visit us, if we believe.

One more criticism must be offered of the teachings both of Faith-Healers and Christian Scientists; they alike condemn the use of those means of curing bodily distempers which science regards as necessary. Mrs. Eddy can hardly find words severe enough to express her feelings about "*materia medica*," and some who insist that present physical health is a part of our

blood-bought redemption, consider the use of medicines as a manifestation of a lack of trust. It must be confessed that herein the defenders of the movements are striking, however maladroitly, at a real evil. The woman who suffered many things of many physicians could today find numerous companions in tribulation, though it must in candour be said that the reputable members of the medical profession are leaders in the effort to abate the abuses of quackery. And those who are in a worse plight because they neglect to consult skilled practitioners, and instead of it depend upon patented nostrums, are legion.

Ignorant doctors may have killed their thousands, but Lydia Pinkham, Mrs. Winslow, and Peruna have slain their tens of thousands. The worst condemnation of the folly of taking unknown and perhaps harmful chemicals to relieve ailments of which there has been no proper diagnosis, as well as of all excessive dependence upon drugs, has come from those who practice the healing art. I think it may truly be said that among all the professions there is none that is more open-minded, more progressive, more filled with the spirit of service, more heroic in emergencies, than that of the practice of medicine.

But because one believes in the power of the Father in heaven to restore soundness of body, it does not follow that one must not use the curative agencies and materials which have been treasured up for us. Nature is a revelation of God. The study of the structure and functions of the human body, and of the characteristics and effects of the various chemical elements and their combinations, is a thinking of His thoughts after Him. That often those who are engaged in such investigations seem not to find Him, is not more strange

than is any other sort of error. True science is a handmaid of religion. Loyalty to truth, so far as it goes, is loyalty to the God of truth. And real reverence will welcome all light from every source, because ultimately it shines from Him. Indeed, the refusal to do what we can do to attain the ends that we seek in prayer, is evidence not of faith but of its lack. If the farmer who trusts God must nevertheless sow his seed, if the Christian who pleads, Thy Kingdom come, must work for the evangelization of the world, why should it be thought inconsistent to invoke the healing of the seamless dress and at the same time to have recourse to the best remedies and skill that are available?

Of course, the objection of the Christian Scientist to "*materia medica*" is based on the assumption of the unreality and evil of matter—though one hardly sees why there should be such intense hostility to that which has no existence, why there should be such fierce tilting at his harmless wind-mill. Faith healers are apparently influenced by an expectation, sometimes avowed, sometimes hardly realized by themselves, of divine intervention by miracle—though the Master Himself made it a practice to require men to do what they could before He exerted His supernatural power, while Paul was devoted to "Luke the beloved physician," and directed Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake and his often infirmities, a prescription for indigestion and anæmia. An ancient wise man of Israel gives this wholesome advice (Quoted in part by Warfield, *Op. Cit.*):

"Honour a physician according to thy need of him, with the honours due unto him;
For verily the Lord hath created him . . .
The Lord created medicines out of the earth;

And a prudent man will have no disgust at them. . . .
My son, in thy sickness be not negligent,
But pray unto the Lord and he shall heal thee.
Put away wrong doing and order thine hands aright,
And cleanse thy heart from all manner of sin.
Give a sweet savour, and a memorial of fine flour;
And make fat thine offering, as one that is not.
Then give place to the physician, for verily the Lord hath created him;
And let him not go from thee, for thou hast need of him."
—Ecclesiastes 38:1, 4, 9-12.

If we were attempting to review the history of bodily healing through religious influence we should need to mention several remarkable individuals who had notable success in dealing with various maladies, and we could not leave out of account the wonders that have been wrought by the relics of saints and at holy places, particularly at Lourdes in France. These phenomena, especially those at the famous shrine last mentioned, warn us that these extraordinary cures are not the monopoly of any one sect or creed and that it is hazardous, because of them, to accept the infallibility of the Pope of Rome, or of the late Mrs. Eddy of Boston.

How, then, shall we explain the fact that genuine relief has been often given to the sick and the suffering, alike by those whose theories and methods are so widely different and frequently inconsistent? That God answers prayer we all believe, and He answers those of people who are foolish and mistaken—else none of us could expect to be heard. But no doubt these recoveries are, at least in large part, connected with powers of our natures which, though mysterious, are by no means miraculous. The mind and the body are so closely related that their mutual influence is very great, and its extent has not yet been fully deter-

mined. But some ills can be eliminated by influencing the thoughts, and others can be greatly alleviated.

The physical discomfort may be caused by distempers which are really mental, and the external effect will disappear when relief comes at the source. Sometimes the pain arising even from an organic disease may be stilled by suggestion, though the condition is not changed. Or favourable results may follow because all the resources of the bodily system are reinvigorated through faith and courage and cheerfulness. And beyond all this there are probably more direct and fundamental physical consequences of psychical changes. As to the question how this is possible, we may let the experts give us such light as they possess.

"The explanation," says the late Professor Münsterberg, "has essentially to rest upon the acceptance of a given physiological apparatus. A certain psychological excitement produces, by existing nerve connections, a certain effect, for instance, on the blood vessels, or on the glands of a certain region, or on a certain lower nervous centre. That such apparatus exists, the physiological experiment with persons who are hypnotized to a high degree, can easily demonstrate. Their nose bleeds at a command; a blister may arise on a part of the skin which is simply covered with a penny, when the suggestion is given that the penny is glowing hot. With some subjects the pulse can become slower and quicker in accordance with the suggestion; with some even the bodily temperature can change on order. Our understanding of these indubitable facts indeed does not go further than the acknowledgment that the paths for such central connections exist. . . . But, after all, in the same way we rely on the nervous connections, if a thought makes us blush and ultimately if our will moves our arm or if our ideas move our speech apparatus. We do not choose the muscles of our arm, we hardly know them; we know

still less in speaking, of the movements of our vocal chords, and in blushing of the dilated blood-vessels. That ideas work on the lower centres of our central nervous system, centres which regulate the actions of our muscles and blood-vessels and glands, must simply be accepted as the machinery of our physiological theory."—*Psychotherapy,* p. 302 f.

Now, it is chiefly, if not wholly, in this obscure region that we are to find the explanation of the extraordinary phenomena of mental healing. So far as I can see, no one society or theory can claim any great preponderance of such cures. They have been wrought by Christian Scientists, by Faith Healers, by Irvingites, by the custodians of sacred shrines, and of the relics of saints, genuine or spurious, by the touch of a king, and even by scientific psychologists.

The chapter of Professor Münsterberg's *Psychotherapy* in which he tells of notable results achieved, with the experimental interest mainly in view, compares not unfavourably with the section of *Science and Health,* entitled "Fruitage." It is doubtless true, however, that the religious appeal is singularly effective even as a therapeutic agency, and that it would be needed to give the right suggestions, even by those practitioners who were unbelievers. Moreover, it must be allowed that the methods of "divine metaphysics," the quiet manner, the low voice, the reading of *Science and Health* which is the most soporific of all books, and the fixing of the attention, tend to bring the patient into a semi-hypnotic state in which the influence of thought is extremely efficacious.

That this power of the mind over the body exists, and that it can be employed in the interest of health, is now recognized more and more. The Immanuel Movement and others of the like kind have attempted,

I think with a good deal of success, to apply the resources of scientific psychology and of religion to the healing of physical maladies. The leaders of the movements frankly admit that there are limits beyond which their treatment is insufficient, and they inspire confidence by the modesty of their claims. According to their plan, each patient is first examined by a trained physician to determine whether the illness is one that can be reached by mental influence, and is accepted only upon a favourable report.

There are some objections to such a method. It does not necsesarily imply any doubt that prayer can move the hand that moves the universe, but it nevertheless rather has the appearance of reducing it to a means of stimulating certain psychic reactions, thus putting it on the level of ordinary *materia medica*. And there is in this practice, as Professor Münsterberg thought, another weak point. Apparently it attempts sharply to discriminate between diseases which require medical and surgical attention, and those which can be treated by prayer and suggestion.

But prayer and suggestion may be very helpful, even in surgical cases; and, on the other hand, neurotics and hysterics, whose ailments clearly call for psychological therapy, may nevertheless be greatly benefitted by bromides and other remedies. These difficulties are probably not insuperable, but it was the conclusion of the Harvard authority quoted above, that ultimately the regular practitioners must be trained to make use of mental as well as of physical means of cure, which would require that thorough courses in psychology be added to the curricula of the medical colleges—a considerable augmentation of an already exacting discipline.

What is, then, the connection between prayer and bodily healing. If we begin at the lowest point, it will be agreed, even by those who allow nothing more than reflex influence to prayer, that its effect in keeping one sound and strong may be very great. The mind controls the material frame to a much greater extent than had been supposed. This is an entirely natural relation, though assuredly that does not shut God out of it. He is immanent in all the forces and processes of the world, while also transcendent above them; and their uniform laws are just His ordinary methods of working. But the human constitution being such as it is, clearly whatever will awaken love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control—the fruits of the spirit—will tend to produce a healthy body as well as a healthy soul.

If such justification, then, were needed, it would be easy to show that supplication to God has a distinct value as a therapeutic agency. Faith and hope, a stout heart, and a good conscience will often cure when medicines fail. But they do not lightly come to us in response to lazy, selfish wishes. There is nothing that can be counted upon to create them except conscious fellowship with the Father in heaven through our Lord Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice has won the pardon of sin. They are to be found at the foot of the cross. Even from the point of view of the healing art, one of the best of all prescriptions is this, " Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things " (Phil. 4:8).

But this is not all that prayer can do for the sick. Indeed, it is pretty certain that without the faith that it can do more than this, it cannot even do this. One cannot but feel that to think of it only as a method of cure which is unusually effective, is to lower it. If it is not the offering of our desires to God, who hears and answers, it is a mere spiritual gymnastic, and to those who understand its emptiness it will cease to be so much as a mental tonic. But if the confidence that prayer achieves objective results is well founded, it is futile to insist that requests for restoration from sickness are exceptions to the rule.

We have the right to believe that there are divine answers to believing requests, which go beyond the ordinary influence of mind over body, extensive as that is. I reject any theory which teaches that there are no ills to be remedied, or that bodily health may be claimed on the same ground and with the same confidence as the forgiveness of sins. But I accept in the full sense of the word the fact of deliverance from bodily ailments by the Father in response to the appeals of His children. When and how far such deliverances shall be granted must be determined by infinite wisdom and love, and that is a cause for rejoicing, and never a cause for doubt that God is a present help in such troubles.

If we seek to define more fully the limits within which we may confidently crave succor from above, let it be said that miracles, as that term is usually understood, are not to be expected. That God can grant them when it is best, I strongly believe; but they are not lightly to be asked by us. Passing reference has already been made to a distinction which is often drawn between miracle and the general supernatural.

We have maintained not only that second causes are to be explained as God's regular ways of working on the physical plane, but that He directs these second causes to accomplish His purposes, that He guides lines of sequence even as we men make use of the forces of nature.

This providential leading, this activity, in nature, and through it, rather than against it, is what may be called the general supernatural, and it can hardly be supposed to be absent from a universe whose Creator is not bound in it. Many of the miracles of the Bible were at bottom of this same nature; possibly all. But miracles in the special sense, though not different in principle, are wonders in which there is a wider deviation from the ordinary uniformities of phenomena, they were connected with revelation, and those through whose agency they were wrought no doubt had an inner assurance that was their warrant for extraordinary requests. The distinction is not fundamental, it is admitted. Any guidance of second causes is the introduction of a new cause. It is perhaps a matter of degree, or circumstances, and of the immediate purpose. The exact line which divides the one sort of divine intervention from the other may not be easy to trace; but this discrimination has practical value.

For it is essential to a sane and reverent religious attitude, to settle it with one's self that there are some things which we are not authorized to expect in answer to our petitions, and which we ought not to ask. Indeed, the intuitions of the Christian conscience virtually decide the matter. We believe in that mighty power which raised Christ Jesus from the dead, but even when we feel most sadly the absence of those whom we have loved and lost a while, we dare not

plead that they should be called forth from the grave. We have an innate conviction that this would be presumption, that to desire an arrest or reversal of the order of nature on whose regularity so much depends, would not be pleasing to the Master, who refused to satisfy His hunger by turning stones into bread, and held that to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, counting on the help of the angels, would be tempting the Lord God.

"I should," writes R. H. Hutton, of the *Spectator*, "think a prayer for the restoration of the dead to life, as David apparently did, a prayer that God's will might *not* be done. So, too, I should think a prayer that fire might not burn, that a river might suddenly run dry, that the sun might not rise, or that gunpowder might lose its explosive power, a prayer that the Creator's laws might fail" (*Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought*, p. 260).

But now, assuming that God will deal with us under this restraint in methods, this care for the order which we have come partially to understand, this parsimony of the miraculous, we may still confidently assert that there is abundant room for His intervention on behalf of those who are the objects of our intercession. How much in every case of sickness turns on what is usually but improperly called chance, on the unforeseen, and incalculable combinations and co-ordinations of different lines of sequence? Was the patient's system in a condition of susceptibility to the influence of the bacteria that produce the disease? Was he at that particular time of susceptibility exposed to the germs that were dangerous to him? Was the nice balance of the digestive apparatus and the circulation of the blood and the nervous system maintained, so as to resist the

toxins and facilitate the actions of remedial agencies? Was the recuperative energy, the *vis medicatrix*, of the body at high tide or at low ebb? Was the psychical attitude favourable or unfavourable to recovery? Was there optimism and hope and bravery and confidence, or was there that gloom and despondency which so often accompany illness and are beyond the reach of argument? Even in these obscure regions, to be sure, we have not got beyond the realm of law, but behind the constant forces, giving them direction, governing their mutual relations, is

"The finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them, and lo, they are."

The God of love, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, watches at the bedside. He can so adjust these various and complicated causes, He can so incline the trembling scale, as to bring back health and strength, if it is best that it should be so.

I conclude, then, that we have every right to pray for deliverance from disease, with a confidence begotten of the fact that we are redeemed, soul and body, that sickness, like sin, is an intruder in God's universe, that He has all power to overcome it and a love that will prompt Him to give us the thing that we ask, or something better than the thing that we ask.

We shall refuse to limit the resources of Omnipotence, but we shall not request Him for our sakes to set aside the invariable laws of nature, feeling sure that through His control and guidance of second causes, He can do all that is best. We shall avail ourselves of the skill and kindness of medical practitioners and of all the helps which the scientific study of the human body and the human mind, as well as of the world of matter,

has placed within our reach; and we shall feel that the restoration of health came from God, even though we recognize that He made use of the trained hands and brain of some " Luke the beloved physician." And we shall think of prayer, not merely as a most effective means by which the mental energies of our complicated personalities may be applied to the healing of the body —though it is that—but as the door of access to the infinite riches of the Father in heaven, who is always able and willing, when it is best for us, to relieve the distempers of the frame which He has created.

XIII

PRAYER AND IMMORTALITY

"Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
Fool'd by those rebel powers that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more:
So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then."

—SHAKESPEARE.

"Then said the Shepherds one to another, Let us here show to the Pilgrims the gates of the Celestial City, if they have skill to look through our Perspective-Glass. The Pilgrims then lovingly accepted the motion; so they had them to the top of a high hill, called Clear, and gave them their Glass to look. Then they assayed to look, but the remembrance of that last thing that the Shepherds had showed them, made their hands shake, by means of which impediment they could not look steadily through the Glass; yet they thought they saw something like the Gate, and also some of the Glory of the place."—JOHN BUNYAN.

SIN, suffering, sickness, and death—these are the fundamental problems of humanity. They are closely related, and we may be sure that the cure for the first will not fail with the others. But the last carries us beyond the experiences of the present, it doth not yet appear what we shall be, and in the exploration

of those unknown regions faith and hope must lead us. When we enter into fellowship with God in prayer we are in the very atmosphere of immortality. For our assurance of eternal life must rest ultimately upon those great facts which are the basis of worship and supplication, that God lives, that God loves, and that we can have personal relations with Him.

It is probably true that belief in a future existence has less influence upon the life and conduct of most men than it has usually exerted in the Christian centuries that are past. "Other-worldliness," whether a fault or a virtue, is not the fault or the virtue of the modern world. Practical materialism, which accepts, or at least does not deny, that God is and that He is a rewarder of those that seek after Him, but is so busy with the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches that it hardly thinks of laying up treasures in heaven, is very prevalent. This must not be regarded as evidence that the former days were better than these. In the ages of faith men believed, without questioning, in the life after death and trembled at the thought of it, but one can hardly doubt that, if the criterion be its effects upon daily conduct, religion then had less influence than it has now.

The average moral level of the twentieth century is unquestionably far higher than that of the tenth, but the longing for the Celestial City and the dread of the Great White Throne are motives which play no such prominent part as in those harsh and evil times. Our Christianity has done so much for civilization that the latter almost feels it has no further need of its benefactor. Perhaps at bottom the common man is not less devoted to the things above, probably on the contrary he is more moved by that love and self-sacrifice which

are the spirit of the Christ, but his inner life is less demonstrative and vocal, social conditions are extremely complex, the struggle for existence is still quite real and stern, and it is easy to be like the man in Bunyan's vision, who "could look no way but downwards with a Muck-rake in his hand; there stood also one over his head with a Celestial Crown in his hand, and proffered him that Crown for his Muck-rake; but the man did neither look up nor regard, but raked to himself the straws, the small sticks, and dust of the floor" (*Pilgrim's Progress,* Part II, p. 249).

In scientific circles the trend of opinion would seem to be in the same direction. Certainly there are many most eminent names that can be set down in the list of the defenders of the immortal hope, and the number who have not bowed the knee to Baal may be much larger than some despondent Elijahs concede. But not long since an investigation by a contemporary psychologist of note indicated that the thought of survival after death was rejected by a considerable group and regarded with indifference by others, those who held to the old faith being, I think, quite in the minority.

Indeed, among thinkers whose conclusions justify great expectations for the future, there is a tendency to assume an attitude of detachment and judicial poise, such as that of the late Professor James, who, in his admirable book on *Human Immortality,* writes, "I have to confess that my own personal feeling about immortality has never been of the keenest order, and that, among the problems that give my mind solicitude, this one does not take the very foremost place" (p. 3)—a state of feeling which to some of us is hard to understand. On the other hand, there are physicists who insist that thought and consciousness are products

of the brain and must cease when its activity is stilled. And there are plenty of psychologists with whom "souls are out of fashion," though there are notable authorities taking the other view, whom the most confident young professors can hardly laugh out of court.

But it must be confessed that, if one start from the postulates of physics, chemistry, biology, or even of psychology, the evidence that can be marshalled in favour of the eternal life is not convincing, or at best indicates only high probability. It is not surprising that this is so, for these departments of knowledge are confined to limited fields and rightly insist on dealing exclusively with the data of those fields. Even the last named, whose territory borders on the spiritual realm, refuses to carry its investigations beyond the "hither side." It cannot be expected, therefore, that these sciences will have anything very positive to say about matters which have been rigourously shut out from their purview. The argument that man, with his supreme endowments of reason and conscience, and with his lordship over creation, is the crown of a long process of evolution, the highest product of the travail of the ages, and that this masterpiece, so slowly brought to completion, can surely not be destined to sink back into nothingness after a few short years of conscious activity, is certainly weighty, especially when presented by a master like John Fiske, but its persuasiveness depends upon considerations which carry us beyond the purely scientific data into the realm of values. We must not, to be sure, underestimate the worth of

"Those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature

Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised."
—WORDSWORTH.

But the physicist and the biologist can take no cognizance of these, and the psychologist studies them as objective facts which show the workings of the mind. The question of their significance and of their validity as clues to the world of reality, is one with which the scientist in his own realm has nothing to do. The reasonings of the metaphysicians are perhaps more satisfactory, and yet even here the faith of a Plato is more impressive than the dialectic by which he supports it.

On the other hand, none of these disciplines can prove that the conscious existence of the self beyond the grave is impossible, nor can they even create any rational presumption against it. It may be confidently affirmed that all attempts to explain that in us which thinks, and decides, and remembers, as a product or an epiphenomenon of matter have failed and will fail. It is true that our mental activities have their physical accompaniments, that lesions of certain cerebral tracts mean the loss of certain intellectual powers, and that we have no experience of a mind functioning without a body. But to say that we have no experience of a fact is not to say that it cannot occur; no explanation on the basis of nerve-cells can be made of the unity of consciousness, even memory is not wholly dependent upon cerebral structure, and it would appear that when one lobe of the brain is disabled by accident or disease, the soul gradually trains the other lobe to do its bidding, thus showing a measure of independence. There is not the slightest ground for the assumption, often openly or tacitly made, that the material part of us is

the fundamental and permanent part and the spiritual dependent upon it and secondary; there is rather a basis, in our ways of knowing and acting, for a precisely opposite conclusion.

At any rate, we have not yet reached and are not likely to reach the deplorable *impasse* described by Sir William Hamilton: " To this testimony I may add that, should physiology ever succeed in reducing the facts of intelligence to phenomena of matter, philosophy would be subverted in the subversion of its three great objects —God, free-will, and immortality. True wisdom would then consist, not in speculation, but in repressing thought during our brief transit from nothingness to nothingness. For why? Philosophy would have become a meditation, not merely of death, but of annihilation, the precept, *Know thyself,* would have been replaced by the terrific oracle to Œdipus—

" May'st thou ne'er know the truth of what thou art;"

and the final recompense of our scientific curiosity would be wailing deeper than Cassandra's, for the ignorance that saved us from despair (*Metaphysics,* Vol. I, pp. 37-38).

But there are higher realms in which the proofs of immortality are most impressive and convincing. In the world of values, the home of ethics and of religion, the fabric of hopes that reach above the present into the eternities has a firm and solid foundation. What assurance can we have that these values, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, shall be perpetuated? Solely the assumption that the world is rational. If these matters

of surpassing worth, which by the constitution of our natures we are compelled to count of more moment than life itself, are at length to vanish like unreal phantasms, then we are in a mad universe, forced to put that highest which is wholly ephemeral and to slight the essences which alone are permanent.

In such a system of unreason there can be no guarantee of the reliability of any of our intellectual processes; yet we cannot commit intellectual suicide. But our values can survive only through the survival of persons that cherish them, for they are the exclusive possession of personality. When there are no more conscious, thinking beings, these supreme interests will have perished forever. The annihilation of a single soul would be the annihilation of a centre of value. If others follow to take up the treasure and pass it on to other generations, it is at least not clear that all the worth achieved in any life can be transmitted to its successors, and a series of vanishing personalities is at best a poor depository of that which is beyond price. But it has been remarked already in these pages that the hope of the eternal existence of the human race upon this globe is almost fantastic. The earth was long in the process of preparation for man; there is little basis for the expectation that it will always be fit for his abode or that the sun will never cease to give it light and heat. The fortunes of this planet must determine the future of our species. We are bound to it, our bodies are of the dust, and we cannot fly to other spheres. If death ends all, then all our values must come to nothing, and the prospects are forever bleak and barren,

> *"Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse,*
> *Without all hope of day!"*
>
> —Milton.

unless there be other intelligences in other regions of space who will conserve these highest things—which would mean that they are valid everywhere; and unless there be a God who is their source—and belief in such a God must be the final proof of immortality.

In particular our moral values demand the persistence of personality beyond this life. (See *The Idea of Immortality,* Principal Galloway, p. 148 ff. A fine discussion to which I am often indebted in the following pages.) Such a demand can be made on the basis of justice. It is impossible to explain the anomalies of this life, the wrongs endured by the innocent, those inequalities which perplexed Old Testament saints and are so poignantly presented in the book of Job, if final rewards and punishments are meted out here and now. Suffering, indeed, must be chiefly educative, but we cannot think that in the ultimate reckonings recompense bears no proportion to desert. And if this conviction be true, the present scene surely presents only part of the picture. The same inference may be drawn, and indeed has been drawn by the greatest thinkers, from the very thought of moral obligation with its ideal always ahead and never overtaken. Our ethical task is not yet done, our goal is not yet reached. "It is of the nature of duty to be endless. There is no such thing as fulfilled obligation, for every achievement of duty forges a fresh claim, every moral conquest is itself the call to a new battle" (*The Persistent Problems of Philosophy,* Miss Calkins, p. 455). The little word *ought* covers eternity.

But he who goes thus far in his reasonings must go farther. It may be asked again, What assurance have we that this is a rational universe? How do we know that even our deepest convictions do not mock us?

Can we be certain that our natures are an expression of reason, or that the world in which we live is not a chaos without intelligent purpose? That the vast creation is sane and not mad, cannot be proved, for it is an assumption with which all attempts at proof must begin. But without such an assumption, there is an end to all thinking, all philosophy, all science, all religion, all knowledge. If it is an act of faith to set out with this conviction, the working hypothesis is confirmed by the constant experience that intelligence in us finds the world intelligible, that our thought meets thought in earth and sky, and so can in a measure understand its environment. And this means God. Ethics, too, carried to its legitimate conclusions, ends in religion. The final demonstration of immortality is the deeper truth that the infinite mind that holds all things in being is our Father in heaven. Prayer which brings us into fellowship with Him, breathes the air of life eternal.

It was by this path that Old Testament writers approached the conception of victory over the grave. The people of revelation, like other nations, inherited a doctrine of the hereafter which afforded little comfort or cheer. Death did not mean annihilation. But the place of the departed was dark, dreary, and dusty; they existed as shadows of what they had been, in a state which was hardly to be called life, shut off from their friends and even from intercourse with Jehovah. The idea can scarcely be denominated Biblical; it was rather an obstacle against which the teachings of the Spirit struggled.

Prophets and psalmists protest against sinking into Sheol, because this fate would involve separation from God. And when they rise, as now and again they do,

to the thought of immortality, they are brought to it because the divine fellowship is to them so real and so blessed that they will not believe they can be banished from it. Or, again, Job makes a great venture of faith with reference to the future because Jehovah seemed to have forsaken him in the present, and out of the depths of his despair comes a strong surge of hope, a kind of protest and revolt against this estrangement. To these saints of the old world the endless life was a postulate of religious experience. And at last, in the fullness of time, Christ Jesus, who was the full manifestation of the Father, brought life and immortality to light.

At this point, then, faith finds a sure resting-place. If God lives and is good, He will certainly not allow the creatures whom He made in His image and brought into friendship with Himself, with a constantly developing capability of understanding His purposes and working with Him, to sink into nothingness. His own character is enough to give certitude to the doubting heart. There are difficulties, inexplicable to us, in the conception of the persistence of our personalities, apart from the bodies which have been their homes. But there are gleams that show the way. Memory, the basis of our sense of identity as time passes, is not wholly dependent upon cerebral cells. The thinking self, which apparently trains the brain that grows with it, to do its bidding, can doubtless find or form a better medium of expression, such as the "spiritual body." But, after all, the one thing needful for us in time and eternity is a heavenly Father who is good and who loves us. The difficulties may be left with Him.

If there be no God, the light of hope must disappear in black night and nothing matters. But if we can believe in a God who cares for us, we may be confident

that His care is without variableness or shadow of turning, and that death itself cannot snatch us out of His hand. The unanswerable argument for a life beyond the grave is the character of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

> *"Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:*
> *Thou madest man, he knows not why,*
> *He thinks he was not made to die;*
> *And Thou hast made him: Thou art just."*
>
> —TENNYSON.

But a God of holy love who will be our surety against the triumph of the last enemy, is exactly the kind of a God that is demanded by the needs and the aspirations of the soul as these express themselves in prayer. The religious nature of man must postulate, to satisfy its cravings, just such an infinite and good Moral Ruler as would value the homage of those who bear His likeness and would feel the loss, if the smallest of them in any corner of His universe, should cease to be. The faith which looks up and the hope which looks on, mutually support one another, for both catch the vision of the same Father of spirits. If our supplications are something more than a cry sent into the limitless void, if there be one who hears and answers, then the future is bright, for the Friend whom we have already come to know in part will not forget us on the other side.

Especially does "that anchor hold" for the Christian who believes that Jesus is the revelation of God, the Word made flesh, and the Redeemer of men. If the Master spoke the truth when He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," if, in short, God is Christlike, the annihilation of those who have entered into fellowship with Him is unthinkable. Our Lord

talked of the heavenly mansions as if they were His loved home, and never far away while He wandered with no place to lay His head.

And indeed His whole thought of the conditions in the Father's house was of this profound religious type. He did not promise mere survival. Continued existence was to Him not enough. The only immortality worth seeking was an immortality based upon reconciliation with a God of redeeming love, and perpetually sustained by union with Him. Not absorption of personality in the divine essence, but a blessed fellowship of the finite person with the infinite during the ages, through grace, constitutes the bliss of the saints. This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. His statements are not quantitative but qualitative. If the character of the ever-living Creator is our warrant for confidence in spite of the dissolution of the earthly tabernacle, it is our reflection of that character as in a mirror that fits us for the society of heaven. Christ in you is the hope of glory.

How intimate, then, is the connection between prayer and this true immortality! Prayer is not only the proof of it but also the preparation for it. The fact of worship is evidence that we are not born to go down to the dust like the beasts that perish. It is, however, possible for us to forget our high destiny, and to reject that intercourse with the eternal without which mere survival through unending ages would be a curse. But the faith that voices itself in genuine supplication is a channel through which redeeming love can reach us and bring us into that relation with the risen Christ which is the assurance of eternal life because it is eternal life already begun.

XIV

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF PRAYER

"'Twas August and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, look'd thrice dispirited.
I met a preacher there I knew, and said:
'Ill and o'erwork'd, how fare you in this scene?'—
'Bravely!' said he; 'for I of late have been
Much cheer'd with thoughts of Christ, the living bread.'
O human soul! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,
To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam—
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night!
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home."

—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

"Where cross the crowded ways of life,
Where sound the cries of race and clan,
Above the noise of selfish strife,
We hear Thy voice, O Son of Man.

"In haunts of wretchedness and need,
On shadowed thresholds dark with fears,
From paths where hide the lures of greed,
We catch the vision of Thy tears.

* * * * *

"O Master, from the mountain side,
Make haste to heal these hearts of pain;
Among these restless throngs abide,
O tread the city's streets again;

"Till sons of men shall learn Thy love,
And follow where Thy feet have trod;
Till glorious from Thy heaven above,
Shall come the City of our God."

—FRANK MASON NORTH.

NEITHER Christianity nor, for that matter, any other religion, can be an exclusively individual interest. The spirit has its own life, it can never express to another all that it is; in its great crises it often feels itself solitary and forsaken, with victory or defeat depending entirely upon its own struggles; it must pass into the vast unknown world alone; but yet its whole development has social aspects, it cannot exist in a vacuum, its own growth would be impossible without external contacts, and its own powers and capacities are formed and conditioned by its environment. No hermit ever escaped from these limitations, for if his isolation had been perfect, it could in the nature of things not have begun soon enough, for the influence of other souls and of other objects is felt before the first prattling of infancy. "We may go further," says Lord Bacon, "and affirm most truly that it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness; and even in this sense also of solitude, whosoever in the frame of his nature and affections is unfit for friendship, he taketh it of the beast and not from humanity" (*Essays*, p. 107).

It would seem, then, to be beyond dispute that Christianity must have both an individual and a social application. Yet it must not be too readily assumed that this truth with its corollaries is generally accepted. Those whose deepest solicitude concerns the salvation of their own souls have often been inclined to neglect or disparage attempts to improve external conditions. Monasticism was an endeavour to escape from the world. There have been ages when charity was highly valued, not so much because it relieved suffering as because it was thought to be a means of achieving merit. In our day such views have few defenders, but

there are people, of high character and great devotion, who are given to opposing or "damning with faint praise" public movements for the removal of poverty, for the defence of helpless classes, and for the amelioration of external conditions—and that, too, on religious grounds.

For example, proposals looking toward the abolition of war are met by the assertion that Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace, that He won the right to the title by His sacrificial death, and that this peace can be obtained only by faith in Him and union with Him. It must be entered by the door of regeneration; it must be an inner experience; he whose service is perfect freedom must set up his throne in the heart, and the kingdom of God will be established. As compared with this all else is superficial. Better social conditions, arrangements for securing justice between man and man, government by the consent of the governed, fair and honourable dealing between nations—all this is good in its way, but there can be no real and lasting peace on earth until the Master is everywhere accepted as Lord of all.

Now, with these positions, so far as they concern the relations of the individual to the Father in heaven, I heartily agree. But if the practical application of them is that all social reforms, all attempts to establish that righteousness that exalteth a nation, and all agreements between governments by which force shall be made to give place to reason, must be deferred until all men are converted, then surely these are hard sayings. The gospel has bearing upon society and government as well as upon the inner life. If that inner life is genuine it will show itself in conduct, and the great stage of conduct is the world of men and things. There is cer-

tainly a Christian way in which the employer can deal with his employee and the employee with his employer. There is a Christian way of approaching the problems concerning the wages of toil, the rewards of capital, and even rents and railroad rates. The teachings of the Master have an application to marriage and divorce, the use of riches and the care of the poor, the right of childhood to leisure for play and of old age to rest, the arrogant exclusiveness of classes and castes, the combinations of business and the unions of labour, the strikes and lockouts by which these try to settle disputes.

And just as certainly great national affairs need the illumination that comes from that true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. There is nothing in the nature of a Congressional bill, even on the tariff or on taxation, which renders it independent of the law of Christ. If all public officials, from the president to the policeman, would habitually face their duties with the query, What would Jesus do? they would not be asking an irrelevant question, and our whole public life would be greatly elevated. Happy the people whose legislators make laws and whose judges enforce them, "as ever in their great Task-Master's eye." There is a sense in which, to quote the title of Dean Freemantle's well-known book, The world is the subject of redemption.

The gospel has a personal and individual aspect; it has also a social aspect. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind"—that is personal and individual. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"—that is social. The first petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be thy name," might by

some be regarded as having to do only with the supplicant and his God. But when we say, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we are brought face to face with the needy and sinful world.

There are those who have exaggerated one side of the teachings of Jesus at the expense of the other, but that is no reason why we should not hold the balance of truth and teach both applications of the divine revelation. In recent times there are preachers who avowedly confine themselves to the social message of the New Testament, and the inevitable result is that the gospel is robbed of its power, and that even its social appeal becomes "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable." That is one extreme. The other is represented by a pastor who excused his indifference toward the efforts to maintain a certain righteous law in a state where corrupt influences were rampant, by saying, "I preach regeneration, not reform." For my part, I venture to affirm that the man whose message makes any approach to the breadth of the evangel will preach regeneration *and* reform.

This position is by no means weakened if we concede, as we must, that the personal side of the gospel is primary and fundamental, that it makes its offer first of all to the individual. That was the method of Jesus. He gave little attention to organization. He studiously refused to interfere in governmental affairs. His plan for producing better social conditions was to win men and women and inspire them to elevate the life of the community and the state of which they were a part. But if the individual aspect of the Christian life is first in order and importance, the social is inseparable from it.

Our powers of thought and expression, our characters, the whole man in each of us, can grow only in contact with the external world and with other personalities. We are not the helpless creation of our environment, but we could not have become what we are except in our environment. And it is further the emphatic teaching of the New Testament that saved and sanctified souls can elevate their environment, can change evil conditions in neighbourhoods and nations, and if they exert no such salutary influence, the salt has lost its savour.

Perhaps this truth has been somewhat obscured for us, by certain unjustifiable inferences which are often drawn from the principle of the separation of Church and State. That each has its own realm and should keep strictly to it, is a position which is accepted with all its consequences in this discussion. I am quite ready to confess that ecclesiastical bodies have frequently stultified themselves and weakened their influence by unwise interference and the proffering of unasked advice, in governmental affairs. But it would be absurd to say that all matters which are beyond the jurisdiction of bishops and general assemblies are for that reason outside the pale of the law of Christ. The Kingdom of God is a bigger and greater thing than the organized Church. It is the ideal for the attainment of which the Church is one of the means, doubtless the most important of all—but not the sole means. Its sway ought to be acknowledged in every human relation. None are too insignificant to be included in it; none are too high to do it homage. Every functionary of government, as he meets the responsibilities of his position, ought to be controlled by the principles of the Master. The powers that be, secular as well as re-

ligious, are ordained of God, and the ruler is a minister of God.

Others hesitate to give cordial support to plans for social and national betterment because they question whether the men with whom these originated were Christians, whether the atmosphere in which they first saw the light was such as a devoted follower of Christ could breathe freely. Does the written instrument in question acknowledge God and the Lord Jesus? Were the men who wrote it members of the invisible body of believers and were their morals high? Was the conference in which the project was launched opened with prayer?

Now, it would be extremely gratifying if such questions could always be answered in the affirmative. But, though one's personal attitude to the Master is the all-important matter, is it not a little presumptuous, in dealing with questions which concern the external relations of men, to attempt to analyse the motives and estimate the spiritual standing of responsible leaders? Who can read the heart but God only? There may be many servants of God who do battle for Him without wearing the uniform or marching in the ranks, nay, perhaps without realizing that they are fighting on His side. The Lord Jesus refused to stop the work of the unknown disciple against whom the complaint was made that "he followeth not us." On a question of public policy it is sufficient to be sure that the program outlined makes for righteousness. We should have had to wait long for the prohibition of the iniquitous liquor traffic if we had insisted that no help should be accepted except from those whose morals and religion had been passed by the censor.

If the gospel speaks with authority in social and

national affairs, we can certainly take a step in advance and say that it has a direct bearing upon international relations, and that if the ruler is the minister of God in his dealings with the people over whom he is set, he is not free from such obligations in determining his policy toward other lands. The powers that be have certain duties and responsibilities that private citizens dare not claim, so that they may rightly punish the enemies of society, taking away their liberty or in extreme cases even life itself, but, broadly speaking, governments have no more license to violate moral law than the farmer or banker.

National selfishness, to which an exaggerated patriotism easily leads, is not different in principle from personal selfishness. "Our country, right or wrong," may be good politics, but it is bad ethics, and means the condemnation of James Russell Lowell for his attitude during the Mexican War, and of David Lloyd-George for opposition to British policy in South Africa a generation ago. "America first" is with a change of names a pretty fair rendering of *Deutschland ueber alles*.

Surely we have failed to learn the lesson of that great cataclysm in which so recently civilization was almost overwhelmed, if we have not reached the conviction that there is a Christian way in which nations should deal with nations. A people can no more exist hermetically sealed within its own territory than can a man in his home. No country liveth to itself. If business and art and science had no protest to make against the apotheosis of a narrow patriotism, whose loyalty cannot cross the boundaries of its own fatherland, Christianity must raise its voice against the thought that we owe love and duty only to those that

speak our language and live under the protection of our flag. Heathen lands have been claimed for God by our missionaries, their soil has been rendered sacred by the graves of saints, and we dare not be pusillanimous enough to abandon our citizens who are messengers of life in these far-flung fields.

For these reasons, the objections which devoted churchmen often make to schemes of social reform, of national improvement, or of international friendship, make little impression upon me except one of astonishment and bewilderment. It is true that the gospel appeals primarily to individuals, and that its influence upon society and government must be exerted through men and women who have caught its spirit. There is a measure of justice in the observation that as long as human hearts are evil, we shall have misunderstandings and crimes, those hatreds and passions which lead to war.

This is only to make the indisputable assertion that the source of all our woe is sin. But if we must defer all attempts to better conditions around us until sin is banished, the prospect is depressing. That principle would condemn all external law and all government, as well as social reforms, national and state laws in defence of oppressed classes, and international treaties and leagues, on the ground that all alike reach only the symptoms, and offer no cure for the deep malady that causes them. The fact, however, is that it is only because of the presence of evil in the world that we require the machinery of government and society. There will be no need of charity organizations, of courts and legislatures, or of alliances to secure peace, in the Celestial City. The kind of logic with which we have been dealing would, if carried to its legitimate con-

clusions, leave no place at all, now or in the great hereafter, for enactments and institutions to promote righteousness and to prevent violence and wrong. These half measures are not allowable until the wicked heart that is in all of us is cleansed and purified; but when hearts are cleansed and purified in the eternal future, they will not be needed. Such is the *impasse* into which we are driven by this singular reasoning.

How different and how satisfactory is the teaching of the Master! The ideal which He constantly held before men was the Kingdom of God, which must be individual, for it is the reign of God in the heart, and must also be social, for it includes all who have submitted to the king. It begins here and now. It reaches every human interest and every human relation, from the cottage to the royal palace, from the crowded city to the lonely desert, from the simple life of the peasant whose acres supply almost all his wants to the complexities of organized industry, from the servant whose eyes wait upon his master to the statesman or the monarch whose policies control empires. It also looks to the future and is to reach its consummation when many shall come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in that kingdom. It is as deep as the depths of the heart. It is as broad as the activities and intercourse of men.

It follows that prayer, as the inevitable and most intimate expression of the religious life, will have its social aspects. It has such an aspect because it can be shared, and has peculiar power when it is shared with others. One place for it is the closet when the doors are shut; another is where two or three are gathered together in His name—and in the latter case there is an especial promise of the divine presence. We can-

not present our petitions in the words of the Lord's Prayer, without recognizing in the pronouns we use the unity of the members of the kingdom. God is the Father of every family in heaven and upon earth, and the closer we come to the Father the nearer are we to all His children. Death itself is only an incident, not an insuperable barrier between those whose oneness is secured by cords that bind them alike to the eternal throne. When we offer our supplications we are in high fellowship with all the saints.

> *"There is*
> *One great society alone on earth:*
> *The noble living and the noble dead."*
> —WORDSWORTH.

In particular our worship grows in intensity and its influence is heightened, and at the same time it is buttressed by extraordinary assurances of help from above, when a group, however, small, are gathered together with a single purpose. The influence of mind upon mind, the contagion of thought in crowds, or even in nations and generations, has been much discussed by the psychologists. The social mind is not a separate entity, but is made up of the individual minds of a multitude—and yet there seems to be a certain overplus, as if the whole were greater than the sum of its parts. The mob is more dangerous than any of its members, and will do that of which the worst of them would have thought himself incapable.

On the other hand, great gatherings of people, moved by the eloquence of some master of speech, while enthusiasm was communicated from soul to soul as if by magic, have risen to heights of heroism and self-sacrifice in which they were lifted out of themselves for a time, perhaps soon to sink back to the old level.

Doubtless the supreme moment in the life of many a crusader was when he listened to Urban II. at the Council of Clermont, and in a transport of zeal assumed the cross while he shouted, *Deus vult*.

One explanation of this group consciousness may possibly be located in the soul itself. There are indications that the human spirit, which ordinarily acts solely through the body, sometimes overpasses the boundaries of the flesh. It may be that one self touches another self in subtler ways than through sight and hearing. This is an opinion which Lord Balfour seems inclined to accept (*Theism and Thought*, p. 202, referring to a discussion by Mr. Gerald Balfour, which I have not seen). "Consciously or unconsciously we are all, he thinks, capable of telepathically affecting others. On the plane of ordinary knowledge this explains much in human intercourse that is mysterious. With every extension of the principle to different levels of being, it inevitably gains in importance." Perhaps, after all, we must not take too rigourously the meditation of the poet:

> *"Yes! in the sea of life enisled,*
> *With echoing straits between us thrown,*
> *Dotting the shoreless watery wild,*
> *We mortal millions live alone.*
> *The islands feel the enclasping flow,*
> *And then their endless bounds they know."*
>
> —MATTHEW ARNOLD.

But, making all allowance for the truth in this view, doubtless the only explanation that psychology can give, there is a deeper one upon which theology will insist. There is a pledge of the divine presence where two or three are gathered together in His name. The Father of our spirits, that infinite consciousness which

includes and penetrates into our finite consciousnesses without destroying their individuality, is the bond of union among His own, and that deepening of devotion, that heightening of aspiration and zeal which is felt when groups of believers worship together, must be the work of His Spirit who makes intercession in each heart and binds them all together. We gladly believe that He helps the infirmities of each isolated suppliant, but there is no doubt a cumulative influence where there is a concert of intercession. We must pray as those who are in the kingdom and in harmony with the whole organism.

There is, however, another way in which prayer may be an expression of the social aspects of Christianity; petitions must be offered for others as well as with others. Indeed, from the subjective point of view such supplication is indispensable as a corrective of selfishness. The subtle influence of egoism intrudes itself at the holiest moments and may mar the highest experiences by presenting them as ends in themselves, to be sought for the joy that they bring. Union with others in intercession is one antidote for this mischievous poison, for in such groups requests must be made only for objects which all desire, and those which are entirely personal are naturally eliminated. But our views are broadened, our understanding of the difficulties and perplexities of others is deepened, our readiness to help them is strengthened, and we are lured into forgetting our own little interests in thinking of the great plans of the Master, when we plead definitely that neighbours, kinsmen, even enemies, may receive rich blessings. " Jehovah turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends " (Job 42:10).

Of course, if one were to pray for others only to save

himself from egoism, this would be a still more refined form of selfishness, and he would receive into his bosom the serpent that he thought to kill. But the needs of suffering, sinning, humanity, the glorious prospect of the triumph of righteousness which may be hastened by our co-operation, and the determination so far as in us lies that the Redeemer shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied—these are motives powerful enough to draw out of itself any soul that knows the meaning of pardon, and to make the habit of intercession for all conditions of men and for the state of the church universal, a real joy. This altruistic phase is most characteristic of the supplications recorded in the Bible.

The Old Testament saints constantly plead for blessings upon Israel and Jerusalem, which from their dispensational point of view were the hope of the world; even in their requests for themselves they quite frequently speak as representatives of the chosen community. St. Paul is always asking his friends to pray for him, but his own prayers are commonly for the Christian congregations and their members, or even for his own kindred according to the flesh. The experience of believers as set forth in the pages of revelation teach us that it is indeed the beginning of the upward course when one cries, " What must I do to be saved? " but that when one has reached greater heights he is apt to be less concerned about his own future and to say with Moses, " Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written " (Exodus 32:31-32); or to say with St. Paul, " I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my

brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:3).

Such an intercession by a member of the Kingdom of God, for the great ends which that kingdom seeks, brings us into a notable fellowship. The spiritual nobility of the race, in every nation under heaven, belongs to it. The hosts of the redeemed on the other side, who have won the victory, are subjects of the same divine realm, and there is no reason to deny that their faith and dependence still find expression in praise and petition, though the teaching which would make them intermediaries to placate a wrathful Redeemer is based upon harsh and mistaken notions of the Father and of the Son of His love. A hierarchy of such intercessors is not needed, since all may come boldly to the throne of grace. But we need not doubt that the incense of their prayers is always going up. And in this high privilege, too, we are co-workers with God, whose Spirit maketh intercession for us within the heart, while the risen Advocate makes intercession before the throne.

Now, the interests of the Kingdom are broad as the earth and long as eternity. And our intercession ought to have something of a similar sweep and comprehension. It will present the needs of individuals. It will not forget the wants and the rights of great classes of society, the poor in their hard toil for daily bread, the rich in their attempts to satisfy the hunger of the soul with that which is not bread. Perhaps the settlement of the conflict between labour and capital is delayed by the lack of prayer. Perhaps the wrongs of helpless childhood are an appeal for this same ministry, together with the practical work which is the fruit of faith.

Perhaps that elevation of public opinion which will destroy municipal corruption, which will breed respect for law, which will enthrone righteousness in all our courts and legislative halls and executive offices, can most easily be brought about by supplication to the eternal throne and a corresponding loyalty in conduct. And perhaps that peace on earth about which the angels sang and the prophets dreamed, will not come until a fuller volume of petition, that the nations may beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, shall go up to the Prince of Peace.

XV

UNANSWERED PRAYERS

"They all were looking for a king
To slay their foes and lift them high:
Thou cam'st, a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.

"O Son of Man, to right my lot
Naught but Thy presence can avail;
Yet on the road Thy wheels are not,
Nor on the sea Thy sail!

"My how or when Thou wilt not heed,
But come down Thine own secret stair,
That Thou mayst answer all my need—
Yea, every bygone prayer."

—GEORGE MACDONALD.

"But the cause why I went from thence, and went thither, Thou knewest, O God; yet didst Thou neither discover it to me, nor to my mother, who heavily bewailed my journey, and followed me as far as the seaside. But I deceived her, though holding me by force, that either I should go back with her, or she might go along with me: for I feigned that I had a friend whom I could not leave, till I saw him with a fair wind under sail. . . . Yet refusing to return without me, I with much ado persuaded her to stay that night in a place hard by our ship, where there was an oratory erected in memory of St. Cyprian. That night I privily stole aboard, but she did not: she tarried behind in weeping and prayer. And what, O Lord, requested she with those tears, but that Thou wouldst not suffer me to sail away from her? But Thou profoundly providing and hearing the main point of her desire, didst not at that time regard her petition, that Thou mightest bring that to pass in me which she had always begged of thee."—AUGUSTINE.

WHAT profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" (Job 21:15). This question is quite modern in its tone. Will the expectation of achieving

results by communion with God bear the test of practical life? No doubt there are very many who will answer, No, though even with these the religious nature will demand expression, especially in times of crisis, and they are likely to turn once more to Him who is a present help in trouble. Carlyle, in atrabiliar moods, thought God did not do anything, yet in the afternoon of life he resorted again to something like the old, long-abandoned habit of childhood.

But there is a common impression, perhaps often not avowed even in thought, that supplication to the Father is a most suitable exercise for the clergy, for women and children, and for anæmic visionaries, but that men of affairs, with their feet on the ground, dealing with business, manufacture, commerce, politics, international interests, can hardly be supposed to make much use of it because its results are not sufficiently concrete and material. Even the strongest believers sometimes find it difficult to give instances of definite answers to their petitions, at least of such a sort as will be convincing to others.

Of course, the fact that often the thing asked for appears not to be granted, is in no wise puzzling to those who maintain that the whole purpose of prayer is realized in its subjective influence, that it is in the power of man by submission and patience and loyalty and bravery to get for himself the reality of what he seeks from God. That conception may make us content with fruitless intercession, yet it is pretty certain in the same proportion to dissipate our interest in the whole matter. But if we hold fast, as I do, to the faith that

> *"More things are wrought by prayer*
> *Than this world dreams of,"*

then this easy explanation of apparent failures is not open to us.

In any case it need not surprise us that there are not many events to which we can point and say positively that these have come to pass because they were asked of God. We are not in the counsels of the Highest, and do not know what might have been or what causes, especially in the spiritual realm, lie back of things as they are. In the nature of the case the issue cannot be tried by tests which would convince the scientific observer. It will always be possible for him to say that the result was brought about by natural means without divine guidance or intervention, and his assertion cannot be disproved because the data are not at hand. We must be content to walk with God by faith, and to wait till the light of eternity reveals the rôle which our supplications have played.

But when we face the question why we do not always receive precise answers to our petitions, we must take into account some very obvious limitations of our right to claim the fulfilment of our wishes. It would be disastrous to ourselves and to the system of which we form a part, if we were assured of the realization of every whim, good or evil. We ought not always to get our own way, for our own way, even when we are sincere and conscientious, is quite often a mistaken and mischievous way. There has never been any mere man wise enough and good enough to be entrusted with such dangerous power.

To what mortal of all the ages would it have been safe to give a free hand in the management of the world? Not to Socrates or Plato among the thinkers; not to Moses or Isaiah or Paul among the religious leaders. In all history there has been but one to whom

one feels that such responsibility could rightly have been delegated, the Man who was more than man, the Word made flesh—and He did not demand it, but in the supreme crisis of sorrow, said, Not as I will, but as Thou wilt. In order that the universe may be preserved from chaos, in order that all things may work together for our own good, we must gladly accept the fact that the decision as to whether our dearest wishes shall be gratified, rest with Him who is too wise to err, too good to be unkind.

Indeed, it is very plain that the desires of all His children could not be fulfilled even by Omnipotence, for those desires are often contradictory. What one longs for, another dreads. When one prays for rain to bring on his crop, another may have a harvest that would be ruined by it. The success for which one pleads may involve the defeat of a rival who is equally devout. War is so unnatural and unrighteous a thing that it often arrays Christians against Christians; both sides send up their petitions for victory to the same Prince of Peace; but it is obviously impossible that both should receive the exact boon requested. It may well be that those who have a high conception of what is involved in fellowship with God would not ask for favours of this sort.

A college football team recently became rather famous not only because of unusual success in winning games, but also because prayer always preceded such games; but it is said that they did not ask for victory; they asked that they might be enabled to play in a straight, clean, honourable manner. Nevertheless, it is inevitable that among the most devoted and unselfish there should often be conflicting petitions. It is an incidental result of our limitations and our imperfections.

But this is not the whole difficulty. We do not know what is best for ourselves, and often beg for that which, if we knew all, we should recognize as a menacing danger. Sometimes the worst penalty that could be inflicted upon us would be to get what we want. "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Psalm 106:15). We are children, and the love of the heavenly Father is often shown in withholding the injurious baubles that strike our fancy, and in bestowing better gifts instead. It would be the worst of unkindness if He should permit His infinite wisdom and benevolence to be turned aside from their great purposes for us, by our own petulance and whims.

For, to go a step farther, the specific petitions that we present, because of our lack of insight, and our ignorance, quite frequently do not set forth the things that we ourselves really want. If we obtained what we ask we should find that it is not what we were seeking. The baby that cries for the moon of course does not in fact desire the moon, the cold, desolate, dead planet that revolves around the earth; the thing it reaches for is a bright, round, silvery disk that seems almost within reach.

The life of St. Augustine furnishes a famous illustration of this truth. A brilliant but immoral young teacher of rhetoric, he desired to go to Rome for reasons that had to do with his work, and looked no higher. His godly mother, unusually devoted to her gifted son and naturally dismayed at the thought of the temptations he would there encounter, prayed with tears that he might not leave her. He deceived her and made the voyage. The event which she had so deplored, to prevent which she had prayed so earnestly, had taken place and the answer for which she longed

was not given. But from Rome he went to Milan, he came under the influence of Ambrose, in the garden with his friend Alypius he heard the voice saying, "Take and read," and opening the volume of the apostle, he found the secret of victory in Christ. Now, this was the consummation that Monica had been seeking in all her years of intercession. A single earnest petition was refused, that the essence of her desire might be accorded to her. The thing she asked was denied, in order that the purpose for which she asked it might be realized.

Often do we need to pray this prayer:

"Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, who knowest our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking; we beseech Thee to have compassion on our infirmities; and those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

It would seem, then, that those are in the right who say that prayer is essentially an appeal to God, asking Him indeed whether the petition ought not to be granted, but always remembering that the decision lies with Him. In the parable of the unjust judge, that official is by no means praiseworthy and the application turns upon the contrast in character between him and God, but perhaps besides its obvious lesson, it is allowable to find in it the teaching that our part is to present our pleas and He must make the award. Few, surely, would have the temerity even to wish that there was in their hands the arbitrary power to get whatever they wanted. Aladdin's lamp was an extremely dangerous plaything. We may well be thankful that our

times are in His hands, not in our own. But it is always in order to come to Him and say, Judge me, and plead my cause. Even when war brings an unnatural separation between Christians, supplication of the truest kind may go up from both sides, but it will be at bottom a laying of the case before Him, perhaps argument that the cause espoused is right, but a full submission to His arbitrament.

This view of the place of prayer really widens its scope. There may be objects for which we may properly strive, but for which we instinctively feel that we ought not to make request, as in the case of the college athletes mentioned. But in general prayer, under this limitation, gains in frankness and inclusiveness. We can tell the Father the whole story of what we think we need, as to things great and little, and leave it to Him with confidence that He will grant them, if it is best, and that if they are withheld there are good reasons for it. Boldness and candour mingle with reverence in the prayers of the Bible. "Righteous art thou, O Jehovah, when I contend with thee; yet would I reason the cause with thee; wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they at ease that deal very treacherously?" It is the confidence of one who is sure that the ultimate issues are in safe hands, and for that very reason feels free to present his perplexities, his doubts, and even his prejudices. The field of petition is limitless because prayer looks at all things from the point of view of the eternal.

* * * * *

The theory of prayer is comprehensible enough, but the practice is the task of a life. It is a school in which no one completes the course on earth, probably not in eternity. But it is under the tuition of Him to whom

the disciples addressed the request, "Lord, teach us to pray." New goals are constantly in view and the endeavour itself is eminently rewarding. The problems of intercession are solved by intercession. If we know these things, happy are we if we do them.

"I saw also that the Interpreter took him again by the hand and led him into a pleasant place, where was builded a stately palace, beautiful to behold; at the sight of which Christian was greatly delighted. He saw also upon the top thereof certain persons walking, who were clothed all in gold. Then said Christian, May we go in thither? Then the Interpreter took him and led him up toward the door of the palace; and behold at the door stood a great company of men, as desirous to go in, but durst not. There also sat a man at a little distance . . . to take the name of him that should enter therein; he saw also that in the doorway stood many men in armour to keep it, being resolved to do the men that would enter what hurt and mischief they could. Now was Christian somewhat in a maze. At last, when every man started back for fear of the armed men, Christian saw a man of a very stout countenance come up to the man that sat there to write, saying, Set down my name, Sir; the which when he had done, he saw the man draw his sword, and put an helmet upon his head, and rush toward the door upon the armed men, who laid upon him with deadly force; but the man, not at all discouraged, fell to cutting and hacking most fiercely. So after he had received and given many wounds to those that attempted to keep him out, he cut his way through them all, and pressed forward into the palace, at which there was a pleasant voice heard from those that were within, even of those that walked on the top of the palace, saying:

"Come in, Come in;
Eternal Glory thou shalt win."

—John Bunyan.

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